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Feb 26th
79

My dear Tinsley

I am doing
all I can to
get the matter
settled at once
I hope it will

be settled this
week by sending
you a cheque

Yours sincerely

James Rice

THE GOLDEN BUTTERFLY.

LONDON:
ROBSON AND SONS, PRINTERS, PANCRAS ROAD, N.W.

THE

GOLDEN BUTTERFLY.

A Novel.

BY THE AUTHORS OF

'READY-MONEY MORTIBOY,' 'THIS SON OF VULCAN,' 'MY LITTLE GIRL,'
'WITH HARP AND CROWN,' 'THE CASE OF MR. LUCRAFT,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
TINSLEY BROTHERS, 8 CATHERINE ST., STRAND.
1876.
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THE

GOLDEN BUTTERFLY.

CHAPTER I.

'You bear a gentle mind, and heavenly blessings
Follow such creatures.'

Half a mile or so above Teddington Lock, where you are quite above the low tides, which leave the mud-banks in long stretches and spoil the beauty of the splendid river; where the stream flows on evenly between its banks, only sometimes swifter and stronger, sometimes slower and more sluggish; where you may lie and listen a whole summer's day to the murmurous wash of the current among the lilies and the reeds,—there stands a house, noticeable among other houses by reason of its warm red brick, its many gables, and its wealth of creepers. Its gardens and lawns slope gently down to the river's edge; the willows hang over it, letting their

long leaves, like maidens' fingers, lie lightly on the cool surface of the water; there is a boat-house, where a boat used to lie, but it is empty now—ivy covers it over, dark ivy that contrasts with the lighter greens of the sweet May foliage; the lilacs and laburnums are exulting in the transient glory of foliage and flower; the westeria hangs its purple clusters like grapes upon the wall; there are green-houses and vineries; there are flower-beds bright with the glories of modern gardening; and there are old-fashioned round plots of ground innocent of bedding-out, where flourish the good old-fashioned flowers, stocks, pansies, boy's love, sweet-william, and the rest, which used to be cultivated for their perfume and colour long before bedding-out was thought of; an old brick wall runs down to the river's edge as a boundary on either side, thick and warm, with peaches, plums, and apricots trained in formal lines, and crowned with wall-flowers and long grasses, like the walls of some old castle. Behind are rooms which open upon the lawn; round the windows clamber the roses waiting for the suns of June; and if you step into the house from the garden, you will enter a dainty drawing-room, light and sunny, adorned with all manner of feminine things, and you will find, besides, boudoirs, studies, all

sorts of pretty rooms into which the occupants of the house may retire, what time they feel disposed to taste the joys of solitude.

The house of a lady. Does any one ever consider what thousands of these dainty homes exist in England? All about the country they stand—houses where women live away their innocent and restful lives, lapped from birth to death in an atmosphere of peace and warmth. Such luxury as they desire is theirs, for they are wealthy enough to purchase all they wish. Chiefly they love the luxury of Art, and fill their portfolios with water-colours. But their passions even for Art are apt to be languid, and they mostly desire to continue in the warm air, perfumed like the wind that cometh from the sweet south, which they have created round themselves. The echoes of the outer world fall upon their ears like the breaking of the rough sea upon a shore so far off that the wild dragging of the shingle, with its long-drawn cry, sounds like a distant song. These ladies know nothing of the fiercer joys of life, and nothing of its pains. The miseries of the world they understand not, save that they have been made picturesque in novels. They have no ambition, and take no part in any battles. They have not spent their strength in action, and therefore feel no weari-

ness. Society is understood to mean a few dinners, with an occasional visit to the wilder dissipations of town; and their most loved entertainments are those gatherings known as garden-parties. Duty means following up in a steady but purposeless way some line of study which will never be mastered. Good works mean subscription to societies. Many a kind lady thinks in her heart of hearts that the annual guinea to a missionary society will be of far more avail to her future welfare than a life of purity and innocence. The Christian virtues naturally find their home in such a house. They grow of their own accord, like the daisies, the buttercups, and the field convolvulus: Love, Joy, Peace, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance, all the things against which there is no law—which of them is not to be seen abundantly blossoming and luxuriant in the cottages and homes of these English ladies?

In this house by the river lived Mrs. L'Estrange. Her name was Agatha, and everybody who knew her called her Agatha L'Estrange. When a woman is always called by her Christian name, it is a sign that she is loved and lovable. If a man, on the other hand, gets to be known, without any reason for the distinction, by *his* Christian name, it is ge-

nerally a sure sign that he is sympathetic, but blind to his own interests. She was a widow, and childless. She had been a widow so long, her husband had been so much older than herself, her married life had been so short, and the current of her life so little disturbed by it, that she had almost forgotten that she was once a wife. She had an ample income; she lived in the way that she loved; she gathered her friends about her; she sometimes, but at rare intervals, revisited society; mostly she preferred her quiet life in the country. Girls came from London to stay with her, and wondered how Agatha managed to exist. When the season was over, leaving its regrets and its fatigues, with the usual share of hollowness and Dead-Sea fruit, they came again, and envied her tranquil home.

She was first cousin to Lawrence Colquhoun, whom she still, from force of habit, regarded as a boy. He was very nearly the same age as herself, and they had been brought up together. There was nothing about his life that she did not know, except one thing—the reason of his abrupt disappearance four years before. She was his confidante: as a boy he told her all his dreams of greatness; as a young man all his dreams of love and pleasure. She knew the soft and generous nature, out of which great

men cannot be formed, which was his. She saw the lofty dreams die away; and she hoped for him that he would keep something of the young ideal. He did. Lawrence Colquhoun was a man about town; but he retained his good-nature. It is not usual among the young gentlemen who pursue pleasure as a profession; it is not expected of them, after a few years of idleness, gambling, and the rest, to have any good-nature surviving, or any thought left at all, except for themselves; therefore Lawrence Colquhoun's case was unusual, and his popularity proportional. He tired of garrison life; he sold out; he remained about town; the years ran on, and he neither married nor talked of marrying. But he used to go down to his cousin once a week, and talk to her about his idle life. There came a day when he left off coming, or if he came at all, his manner to his cousin was altered. He became gloomy; and one day she heard, in a brief and unsatisfactory letter, that he was going to travel for a lengthened period. The letter came from Scotland, and was as brief as a dinner invitation.

He went; he was away for four years; during that time he never once wrote to her; she heard nothing of him or from him.

One day, without any notice, he appeared again.

He was very much the same as when he left England—men alter little between thirty and fifty—only a little graver; his beard a little touched with the gray hairs which belong to the eighth lustrum; his eyes a little crowsfooted; his form a little filled out. The gloom was gone, however; he was again the kindly Lawrence, the genial Lawrence, Lawrence the sympathetic, Lawrence the lazy.

He walked in as if he had been away a week. Agatha heard a step upon the gravel-walk, and knew it. Her heart beat a little—although a woman may be past forty she may have a heart still—and her eyes sparkled. She was sitting at work—some little useless prettiness. On the work-table lay a novel, which she read in the intervals of stitching; the morning was bright and sunny, with only a suspicion of east wind, and her windows were open; flowers stood upon her table; flowers in pots and vases stood in her windows; such flowers as bloom in May were bright in her garden; and the glass doors of her conservatory showed a wealth of flowers within. A house full of flowers, and herself a flower too—call her a rose fully blown, or call her a glory of early autumn—a handsome woman still, sweet and to be loved, with the softness of her tranquil life in

every line of her face, and her warmth of heart in every passing expression.

She started when she heard his step, because she recognised it. Then she sat up and smiled to herself. She knew how her cousin would come back.

In fact he walked in at her open window, and held out his hand without saying a word. Then he sat down, and took a single glance at his cousin first and the room afterwards.

'I have not seen you lately, Lawrence,' said Agatha, as if he had been away for a month or so.

'No; I have been in America.'

'Really! You like America?' She waited for him to tell her what he would.

'Yes. I came back yesterday. You are looking well, Agatha.'

'I am very well.'

'And you have got a new picture on the wall. Where did you buy this?'

'At Agnew's, three years ago. It was in the Exhibition. Now I think of it, you have been away for four years, Lawrence.'

'I like it. Have you anything to tell me, Agatha?'

'Nothing that will interest you. The house is

the same. We have had several dreadful winters, and I have been in constant fear that my shrubs would be killed. Some of them were. My dog Pheenie is dead, and I never intend to have another. The cat that you used to tease is well. My aviary has increased; my horses are the same as you knew four years ago; my servants are the same; and my habits, I am thankful to say, have not deteriorated to my knowledge, although I am four years older.'

'And your young ladies—the traps you used to set for me when I was four years younger, Agatha—where are they?'

'Married, Lawrence, all of them. What a pity that you could not fix yourself! But it is never too late to mend. At one time I feared you would be attracted by Victoria Pengelley.'

Lawrence Colquhoun visibly changed colour, but Agatha was not looking at him.

'That would have been a mistake. I thought so then, and I know it now. She is a cold and bloodless woman, Lawrence. Besides, she is married, thank goodness. We must find you some one else.'

'My love-days are over,' he said, with a harsh and grating voice. 'I buried them before I went abroad.'

'You will tell me all about that some day, when you feel communicative. Meantime stay to dinner, and enliven me with all your adventures. You may have some tea if you like, but I do not invite you, because you will want to go away again directly afterwards. Lawrence, what do you intend to do, now you are home again? Are you going to take up the old aimless life, or shall you be serious?'

'I think the aimless life suits me best. And it certainly is the slowest. Don't you think, Agatha, that as we have got to get old and presently to die, we may as well go in for making the time go slow? That is the reason why I have never done anything.'

'I never do anything myself, except listen to what other people tell me. But I find the days slip away all too quickly.'

'Agatha, I am in a difficulty. That is one of the reasons why I have come to see you to-day.'

'Poor Lawrence! You always are in a difficulty.'

'This time it is not my fault; but it is serious. Agatha, I have got—a—'

I do not know why he hesitated, but his cousin caught him up with a little cry.

'Not a wife, Lawrence; not a wife, without telling me!'

'No, Agatha,' he flushed crimson, 'not a wife.

That would have been a great deal worse. What I have got is a ward.'

'A ward?'

'Do you remember Dick Fleming, who was killed in the hunting-field about fifteen years ago?'

'Yes, perfectly. He was one of my swains ever so long ago, before I married my poor dear husband.'

Agatha had used the formula of her 'poor dear husband' for more than twenty years; so long, in fact, that it was become a mere collocation of words, and had no longer any meaning, certainly no sadness.

'He left a daughter, then a child of four or five. And he made me one of that child's guardians. The other was a Mr. Dyson, who took her and brought her up. He is dead, and the young lady, now nineteen years of age, comes to me.'

'But, Lawrence, what on earth are you going to do with a girl of nineteen?'

'I don't know, Agatha. I cannot have her with me in the Albany, can I?'

'Not very well, I think.'

'I cannot take a small house in Chester-square, and give evening parties for my ward and myself, can I?'

'Not very well, Lawrence.'

'She is staying with my lawyer, Jagenal; a capital fellow, but his house is hardly the right place for a young lady.'

'Lawrence, what will you do? This is a very serious responsibility.'

'Very.'

'What sort of a girl is she?'

'Phillis Fleming is what you would call, I think, a beautiful girl. She is tall, and has a good figure—a delicious figure. Her eyes are brown, and her hair is brown, with lots of it. Her features are small, and not too regular. She has got a very sweet smile, and I should say a good temper, so long as she has her own way.'

'No doubt,' said Agatha. 'Pray go on; you seem to have studied her appearance with a really fatherly care.'

'She has a very agreeable voice; a *naïveté* in manner that you would like; she is clever and well informed.'

'Is she strong-minded, Lawrence?'

'NO,' said Lawrence, with emphasis, 'she is not. She has excellent ideas on the subject of her sex.'

'Always in extremes, of course,' said Agatha,

meaning something, I suppose, though I am not certain what.

'She wants, so far as I can see, nothing but the society of some amiable accomplished gentlewoman—'

'Lawrence, you are exactly the same as you always were. You begin by flattery. Now I know what you came here for.'

'An amiable accomplished gentlewoman, who would exercise a gradual and steady influence upon her.'

'You want her to stay with me, Lawrence. And you are keeping something back. Tell me instantly. You say she is beautiful. It must be something else. Are her manners in any way unusual? Does she drop *h*'s, and eat with her knife?'

'No; her manners are, I should say, perfect.'

'Temper good, you say; manner perfect; appearance graceful. What can be the reserved objection? My dear cousin, you pique my curiosity. She is sometimes, probably, insane?'

'No, Agatha, not that I know of. It is only that her guardian brought her up in entire seclusion from the world, and would not have her taught to read and write.'

'How very remarkable!'

'On the other hand, she can draw. She draws

everything and everybody. She has got a book full of drawings which she calls her diary. They are the record of her life. She will show them to you, and tell you all her story. You will take her for a little while, Agatha, will you ?'

Of course she said 'Yes.' She had never refused Lawrence Colquhoun anything in her life. Had he been a needy man he would have been dangerous. But Lawrence Colquhoun wanted nothing for himself.

'My dear Agatha, it is very good of you. You will find the most splendid material to work upon, better than you ever had. The girl is different from any other girl you have ever known. She talks and thinks like a boy. She is as strong and active as a young athlete. I believe she would outrun Atalanta; and yet I think she is a thorough woman at heart.'

'I should not at all wonder at her being a thorough woman at heart. Most of us are. But, Lawrence, you must not fall in love with your own ward.'

He laughed, a little uneasily.

'I am too old for a girl of nineteen,' he replied.

'At any rate, you have excited my curiosity.

Let her come, Lawrence, as soon as you please. I want to see this paragon of girls, who is more ignorant than a charity schoolgirl.'

'On the contrary, Agatha, she is better informed than most girls of her age. If she is not well read she is well told.'

'But really, Lawrence, think. She cannot read, even.'

'Not if you gave her a basketful of tracts. But that is rather a distinction now. At least, she will never want to go in for what they call the Higher Education, will she?'

'She must learn to read; but will she ever master Spelling?'

'Very few people do; they only pretend. I am weak myself in spelling. Phillis does not want to be a certificated Mistress, Agatha.'

'And Arithmetic too.'

'Well, my cousin, of course the Rule of Three is as necessary to life as the Use of the Globes, over which the schoolmistresses used to keep such a coil. And it has been about as accessible to poor Phillis as an easy seat to a tombstone cherub. But she can count and multiply and add, and tell you how much things ought to come to; and really, when you think of it, a woman does not want much more, does she?'

'It is the mental training, Lawrence. Think of the loss of mental training.'

'I feel that too,' he said, with a smile of sympathy. 'Think of growing up without the discipline of Vulgar Fractions or Genteel Decimals. One is appalled at imagining what our young ladies would be without it. But you shall teach her what you like, Agatha.'

'I am half afraid of her, Lawrence.'

'Nonsense, my cousin; she is sweetness itself. Let me bring her to-morrow?'

'Yes; she can have the room next to mine.' Agatha sighed a little. 'Suppose we don't get on together after all. It would be such a disappointment, and such a pain to part.'

'Get on, Agatha?—and with you? Why, all the world gets on with you. Was there ever a girl in the world that you did not get on with?'

'Yes, there was. I never got on with Victoria Pengelley—Mrs. Cassilis. Shall you call upon her, Lawrence?'

'No—yes—I don't know, Agatha,' he replied hurriedly; and went away with scant leave-taking. He neither took any tea nor stayed to dinner.

Then Agatha remembered.

'Of course,' she said. 'How stupid of me!

They used to talk about Lawrence and Victoria. Can he think of her still? Why, the woman is as cold as ice and as hard as steel, besides being married. A man who would fall in love with Victoria Pengelley would be capable of falling in love with a marble statue.'

'My cousin, Lawrence Colquhoun,' she told her friends in her letters—Agatha spent as much time letter-writing as Madame du Deffand—'has come back from his travels. He is not at all changed, except that he has a few gray hairs in his beard. He laughs in the same pleasant way; has the same soft voice; thinks as little seriously about life; and is as perfectly charming as he has always been. He has a ward, a young lady, daughter of an old friend of mine. She is named Phillis Fleming. I am going to have her with me for a while, and I hope you will come and make her acquaintance, but not just yet, not until we are used to each other. I hear nothing but good of her.'

Thus did this artful woman gloss over the drawbacks of poor Phillis's education. Her friends were to keep away till such time as Phillis had been drilled, inspected, reviewed, manœuvred, and taught the social tone. No word, you see, of the little deficiencies which time alone could be expected to

fill up. Agatha L'Estrange, in her way, was a woman of the world. She expected, in spite of her cousin's favourable report, to find an awkward, rather pretty, wholly unpresentable hoyden. And she half repented that she had so easily acceded to Lawrence Colquhoun's request.

It was nearly six next day when Phillis arrived. Her guardian drove her out in a dog-cart, her maid following behind with the luggage. This mode of conveyance, being rapid, open, and especially adapted for purposes of observation, pleased Phillis mightily; she even preferred it to a hansom cab. She said little on the road, being too busy in the contemplation of men and manners. Also she was as yet hardly at home with her new guardian. He was pleasant; he was thoughtful of her; but she had not yet found out how to talk with him. Now with Jack Dunquerque—and then she began to think how Jack would look driving a dog-cart, and how she should look beside him.

Lawrence Colquhoun looked at his charge with eyes of admiration. Many a prettier girl, he thought, might be seen in a London ballroom or in the Park, but not one brighter or fresher. Where did it come from, this piquante way?

Phillis asked no more questions about Mrs. L'Estrange. Having once made up her mind that she should rebel and return to Mr. Jagenal in case she did not approve of Mr. Colquhoun's cousin, she rested tranquil. To be sure she was perfectly prepared to like her, being still in the stage of credulous curiosity in which every fresh acquaintance seemed to possess all possible virtues. Up to the present she had made one exception; I am sorry to say it was that of the only woman she knew—Mrs. Cassilis. Phillis could not help feeling as if life with Mrs. Cassilis would after a time become tedious. Rather, she thought, life with the Twins.

They arrived at the house by the river. Agatha was in the garden. She looked at her visitor with a little curiosity, and welcomed her with both hands and a kiss. Mrs. Cassilis did not kiss Phillis. In fact, nobody ever had kissed her at all since the day when she entered Abraham Dyson's house. Jack, she remembered, had proposed to commence their friendship with an imitation of the early Christians, but the proposal, somehow, came to nothing. So when Agatha drew her gently towards herself and kissed her softly on the forehead, poor Phillis changed colour and was confused. Agatha thought it was shyness, but Phillis was never shy.

'You are in good time, Lawrence. We shall have time for talk before dinner. You may lie about in the garden if you please till we come to look for you. Come, my dear, and I will show you your room.'

At Highgate Phillis's room was furnished with a massive four-post bedstead and adorned with dusky hangings. Solidity, comfort, and that touch of gloom which our grandfathers always lent to their bedrooms, marked the Highgate apartment. At Carnarvon-square she had the 'spare room,' and it was furnished in much the same manner, only that it was larger, and the curtains were of lighter colour.

She saw now a small room, still with the afternoon sun upon it, with a little iron bedstead in green and gold, and white curtains. There was a sofa, an easy-chair, a table at one of the windows, and one in the centre of the room; there were bookshelves; and there were pictures.

Phillis turned her bright face with a grateful cry of surprise.

'O, what a beautiful room!'

'I am glad you like it, my dear. I hope you will be comfortable in it.'

Phillis began to look at the pictures on the wall.

She was critical about pictures, and these did not seem very good.

'Do you like the pictures?'

'This one is out of drawing,' she said, standing before a water-colour. 'I like this better,' moving on to the next. 'But the painting is not clear.'

Agatha remembered what she had paid for these pictures, and hoped the fair critic was wrong. But she was not; she was right.

And then, in her journey round the room, Phillis came to the open window, and cried aloud with surprise and astonishment.

'O Mrs. L'Estrange, is it—is it—' she asked, in an awe-struck voice, turning grave eyes upon her hostess, as if imploring that no mistake should be made on a matter of such importance. 'Is it—really—the Thames?'

'Why, my dear, of course it is.'

'I have never seen a river. I have so longed to see a river, and especially the Thames. Do you know

"Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song"?

And again—O, there are swans!

> "With that I saw two swans of goodly hue
> Come softly swimming down along the lee;
> Two fairer birds I never yet did see."'

'I am glad you read poetry, my dear.'

'But I do not. I cannot read; I only remember. Mrs. L'Estrange, can we get close to it, quite close to the water? I want to see it flowing.'

They went back into the garden, where Lawrence was lying in the shade, doing nothing. Phillis looked not at the flowers or the spring blossoms; she hurried Agatha across the lawn, and stood at the edge, gazing at the water.

'I should like,' she murmured presently, after a silence,—'I should like to be in a boat and drift slowly down between the banks, seeing everything as we passed, until we came to the place where all the ships come up. Jack said he would take me to see the great ships sailing home laden with their precious things. Perhaps he will. But O, Mrs. L'Estrange, how sweet it is! There is the reflection of the tree; see how the swans sail up and down; there are the water-lilies; and look, there are the light and shade chasing each other up the river before the wind.'

Agatha let her stay a little longer, and then led her away to show her flowers and hothouses. Phillis knew all about these and discoursed learnedly. But her thoughts were with the river.

Lawrence went away soon after dinner. It was a

full moon, and the night was warm. Agatha and Phillis went into the garden again when Lawrence left them. It was still and silent, and as they stood upon the walk the girl heard the low murmurous wash of the current singing an invitation among the grasses and reeds of the bank.

'Let us go and look at the river again,' she said.

If it was beautiful in the day, with the evening sun upon it, it was ten times as beautiful by night, when the shadows made great blacknesses, and the bright moon silvered all the outlines and threw a long way of light upon the rippling water.

Presently they came in and went to bed.

Agatha, half an hour later, heard Phillis's window open. The girl was looking at the river again in the moonlight. She saw the water glimmer in the moonlight; she heard the whisper of the waves. Her thoughts—they were the long thoughts of a child—went up the stream, and wondered through what meadows and by what hills the stream had flowed; then she followed the current down, and had to picture it among the ships before it was lost in the mighty ocean.

As she looked there passed a boat full of people. They were probably rough and common people, but

among them was a woman, and she was singing. Phillis wondered who they were. The woman had a sweet voice. As they rowed by the house one of the men lit a lantern, and the light fell upon their faces, making them clear and distinct for a moment, and then was reflected in the black water below. Two of them were rowing, and the boat sped swiftly on its way down the stream. Phillis longed to be with them on the river.

When they were gone there was silence for a space, and then the night became suddenly musical.

'Jug, jug, jug!' it was the nightingale; but Phillis's brain was excited, and to her it was a song with words. 'Come, come, come,' sang the bird. 'Stay with us here and rest—and rest. This is better than the town. Here are sweetness and peace; this is the home of love and gentleness; here you shall find the Coping-stone.'

CHAPTER II.

'But if ye saw that which no eyes can see,
The inward beauty of her lively spright
Garnish'd with heavenly gifts of high degree,
Much more, then, would you wonder at the sight.'

'I LIKE her, my dear Lawrence,' Agatha wrote, a fortnight after Phillis's arrival. 'I like her not only a great deal better than I expected, but more than any girl I have ever learned to know. She is innocent, but then innocence is very easily lost; she is fresh, but freshness is very often a kind of electro-plating, which rubs off and shows the base metal beneath. Still Phillis's nature is pure gold; of that I am quite certain; and with sincere people one always feels at ease.

'We were a little awkward at first, though perhaps the awkwardness was chiefly mine, because I hardly knew what to talk about. It seemed as if, between myself and a girl who cannot read or write, there must be such a great gulf that there would be nothing in common. How conceited we are over our education! Lawrence, she is quite the best-informed

girl that I know; she has a perfectly wonderful memory; repeats pages of verse which her guardian taught her by reading it to her; talks French very well, because she has always had a French maid; plays and sings by ear; and draws like a Royal Academician. The curious thing, however, is the effect which her knowledge has had upon her mind. She knows what she has been told, and nothing more. Consequently her mind is all light and shade, like a moonlight landscape. She wants *atmosphere;* there is no haze about her. I did not at all understand, until I knew Phillis, what a very important part haze plays in our every-day life. I thought we were all governed by clear and definite views of duty, religion, and politics. My poor Lawrence, we are all in a fog. It is only Phillis who lives in the cloudless realms of pure conviction. In politics she is a Tory, with distinct ideas on the necessity of hanging all Radicals. As for her religion— But that does not concern you, my cousin. No doubt you are yourself so hopelessly astray with all the cross-lights of modern scepticism, that the simple creed of an illiterate girl would only make your perplexity worse. Or perhaps, like most of your class, you never think about religion at all, in which case you would not be interested in Phillis's doctrines.

'I took her to church on Sunday. Before the service I read her the hymns which we were to sing, and after she had criticised the words in a manner peculiarly her own, I read them again, and she knew those hymns. I also told her to do exactly as I did in the matter of uprising and downsitting.

'One or two things I forgot, and in other one or two she made little mistakes. It is usual, Lawrence, as you may remember, for worshippers to pray in silence before sitting down. Phillis was looking about the church, and therefore did not notice my performance of this duty. Also I had forgotten to tell her that loud speech is forbidden by custom within the walls of a church. Therefore it came upon me with a shock when Phillis, after looking round in her quick eager way, turned to me and said quite loud, "This is a curious place! Some of it is pretty, but some is hideous."

'It was very true, because the church has half a dozen styles, but the speech caused a little consternation in the place. I think the beadle would have turned us out had he recovered his presence of mind in time. This he did not, fortunately, and the service began.

'No one could have behaved better during the prayers than Phillis. She knelt, listening to every

word. I could have wished that her intensity of attitude had not betrayed a perfect absence of familiarity with church customs. During the psalms she began by listening with a little pleasure in her face. Then she looked a little bored; and presently she whispered to me, "Dear Agatha, I really must go out if this tune is not changed." Fortunately the psalms were not long.

'She liked the hymns, and made no remark upon them, except that one of the choir-boys was singing false, and that she should like to take him out of the choir herself there and then. It was quite true, and I really feared that her sense of duty might actually impel her to take the child by the ear and lead him solemnly out of church.

'During the sermon, I regret to say that she burst out laughing. You know Phillis's laugh—a pretty rippling laugh without any malice in it. O, how rare a sweet laugh is! The curate, who was in the pulpit—a very nice young man, and a gentleman, but not, I must own, intellectual; and I hear he was plucked repeatedly for his degree—stopped, puzzled and indignant, and then went on with his discourse. I looked, I suppose, so horrified that Phillis saw she had done wrong, and blushed. There were no more *contretemps* in the church.

"My dear Agatha," she explained, when we came out, "I suppose I ought not to have laughed. But I really could not help it. Did you notice the young gentleman in the box? He was trying to act, but he spoke the words so badly, just as if he did not understand them. And I laughed without thinking. I am afraid it was very rude of me."

'I tried to explain things to her, but it is difficult, because sometimes you do not quite know her point of view.

'Next day the curate called. To my vexation Phillis apologised. Without any blushes she went straight to the point.

"Forgive me," she said. "I laughed at you yesterday in church; I am very sorry for it."

'He was covered with confusion, and stammered something about the sacred building.

"But I never was in a church before," she went on.

"That is very dreadful!" he replied. "Mrs. L'Estrange, do you not think it is a very dreadful state for a young lady?"

'Then she laughed again, but without apologising.

"Mr. Dyson used to say," she explained to me, "that everybody's church is his own heart. He

never went to church, and he did not consider himself in a dreadful state at all, poor dear old man!"

'If she can fall back on an axiom of Mr. Abraham Dyson's, there is no further argument possible.

'The curate went away. He has been here several times since, and I am sure that I am not the attraction. We have had one or two little afternoons on the lawn, and it is pretty to see Phillis trying to take an interest in this young man. She listens to his remarks, but they fail to strike her; she answers his questions, but they seem to bore her. In fact, he is much too feeble for her; she has no respect for the cloth at all; and I very much fear that what is sport to her is going to be death to him. Of course, Lawrence, you may be quite sure that I shall not allow Phillis to be compromised by the attentions of any young man—yet. Later on we shall ask your views.

'Her guardian must have been a man of great culture. He has taught her very well, and everything. She astonished the curate yesterday by giving him a little historical essay on his favourite Laud. He understood very little of it, but he went away sorrowful. I could read in his face a determination to get up the whole subject, come back, and have it out with Phillis. But she shall not be dragged into

an argument, if I can prevent it, with any young man. Nothing more easily leads to entanglements, and we must be ambitious for our Phillis.

"It is a beautiful thing!" she said the other day, after I had been talking about the theory of public worship—"a beautiful thing for the people to come together every week and pray. And the hymns are sweet, though I cannot understand why they keep on singing the same tune, and that such a simple thing of a few notes."

'The next Sunday I had a headache, and Phillis refused to go to church without me. She spent the day drawing on the bank of the river.

'Mrs. Cassilis has been to call upon us. Victoria was never a great friend of mine when she was young, and I really like her less now. She was kind to Phillis, and proposed all sorts of hospitalities, which we escaped for the present. I quite think that Phillis should be kept out of the social whirl for a few months longer.

'Victoria looked pale and anxious. She asked after you in her iciest manner; wished to know where you were; said that you were once one of her friends; and hoped to see you before long. She is cold by nature, but her coldness was assumed here, because she suddenly lost it. I am quite sure,

Lawrence, that Victoria Pengelley was once touched, and by you. There must have been something in the rumours about you two four years ago. Lazy Lawrence! It is a good thing for you that there was nothing more than rumour.

'We were talking of other things—important things, such as Phillis's wardrobe, which wants a great many additions—when Victoria, *à propos* of nothing, asked me if you were changed at all. I said no, except that you were more confirmed in laziness. Then Phillis opened her portfolio, where she keeps her Diary after her own fashion, and showed the pencil sketch she has made of your countenance. It is a good deal better than any photograph, because it has caught your disgraceful indolence, and you stand confessed for what you are. How the girl contrives to put the *real* person into her portraits, I cannot tell. Victoria took it, and her face suddenly softened. I have seen the look on many a woman's face. I look for it when I suspect that one of my young friends has dropped head over ears in love; it comes into her eyes when young; Orlando enters the room, and then I know and act accordingly. Poor Victoria! I ought not to have told you, Lawrence, but you will forget what I said. She glanced at the portrait and changed colour.

Then she asked Phillis to give it to her. "You can easily make another," she said, "and I will keep this, as a specimen of your skill and a likeness of an old friend."

'She kept it, and carried it away with her.

'I have heard all about the Coping-stone. What a curious story it is! Phillis talks quite gravely of the irreparable injury to the science of Female Education involved in the loss of that precious chapter. Mr. Jagenal is of opinion that without it the Will cannot be carried out, in which case Mr. Cassilis will get the money. I sincerely hope he will. I am one of those who dislike, above all things, notoriety for women, and I should not like our Phillis's education and its results made the subject of lawyers' wit and rhetoric in the Court of Chancery. Do you know Mr. Gabriel Cassilis? He is said to be the cleverest man in London, and has made an immense fortune. I hope Victoria is happy with him. She has a child, but does not talk much about it.

'I have been trying to teach Phillis to read. It is a slow process, but the poor girl is very patient. How we ever managed to "worry through," as the Americans say, with such a troublesome acquirement, I cannot understand. We spend two hours a day

over the task, and are still in words of one syllable. Needless to tell you that the lesson-book—"First Steps in Reading"—is regarded with the most profound contempt, and is already covered with innumerable drawings in pencil.

'Notes in music are easier. Phillis can already read a little, but the difficulty here is, that if she learns the air from the notes, she knows it once for all, and further reading is superfluous. Now little girls have as much difficulty in playing notes as in spelling them out, so that they have to be perpetually practising the art of reading. I now understand why people who teach are so immeasurably conceited. I am already so proud of my superiority to Phillis in being able to read, that I feel my moral nature deteriorating. At least, I can sympathise with all schoolmasters, from the young man who holds his certificated nose high in the air to Dr. Butler of Harrow, who sews up the pockets of his young gentlemen's trousers.

'Are you tired of my long letter? Only a few words more.

'I have got a music- and a singing-master for Phillis. They are both delighted with her taste and musical powers. Her voice is very sweet, though not strong. She will never be tempted to rival pro-

fessional people, and will always be sure to please when she sings.

'I have also got an artist to give her a few lessons in the management of her colours. He is an elderly artist, with a wife and bairns of his own, not one of the young gentlemen who wear velvet coats and want to smoke all day.

'You must yourself get a horse for her, and then you can come over and ride with her. At present she is happy in the contemplation of the river, which exercises an extraordinary power over her imagination. She is now, while I write, sitting in the shade, singing to herself in solitude. Beside her is the sketch-book, but she is full of thought and happy to be alone. Lawrence, she is a great responsibility, and it is sad to think that the Lesson she most requires to learn is the Lesson of distrust. She trusts everybody, and when anything is done or said which would arouse distrust in ourselves, she only gets puzzled and thinks of her own ignorance. Why cannot we leave her in the Paradise of the Innocent, and never let her learn that every stranger is a possible villain? Alas, that I must teach her this lesson; and yet one would not leave her to find it out by painful experience! My dear Lawrence, I once read that it was the custom in

savage times to salute the stranger with clubs and stones, because he was sure to be an enemy. How far have we advanced in all these years? You sent Phillis to me for teaching, but it is I who learn from her. I am a worldly woman, cousin Lawrence, and my life is full of hollow shams. Sometimes I think that the world would be more tolerable were all the women as illiterate as dear Phillis.

'Do not come to see her for a few days yet, and you will find her changed in those few things which wanted change.'

Sitting in solitude? Gazing on the river? Singing to herself? Phillis was quite otherwise occupied, and much more pleasantly.

She had been doing all these things, with much contentment of soul, while Agatha was writing her letters. She sat under the trees upon the grass, a little straw hat upon her head, letting the beauty of the season fill her soul with happiness. The sunlit river rippled at her feet; on its broad surface the white swans lazily floated; the soft air of early summer fanned her cheek; the birds darted across the water as if in an ecstasy of joy at the return of the sun—as a matter of fact they had their mouths wide open and were catching flies; a lark was singing in

the sky; there were a blackbird and a thrush somewhere in the wood across the river; away up the stream there was a fat old gentleman sitting in a punt; he held an umbrella over his head because the sun was hot, and he supported a fishing-rod in his other hand. Presently he had a nibble, and in his anxiety he stood up the better to manœuvre his float; it was only a nibble, and he sat down again. Unfortunately he miscalculated the position of the chair, and sat upon space, so that he fell backwards all along the punt. Phillis heard the bump against the bottom of the boat, and saw a pair of fat little legs sticking up in the most comical manner; she laughed, and resolved upon drawing the fat old gentleman's accident as soon as she could find time.

The afternoon was very still; the blackbird carolled in the trees, and the 'wise thrush' repeated his cheerful philosophy; the river ran with soft whispers along the bank; and Phillis began to look before her with eyes that saw not, and from eyelids that, in a little, would close in sleep.

Then something else happened.

A boat came slowly up the river, close to her own bank. She saw the bows first, naturally; and then she saw the back of the man in it. Then the boat

revealed itself in full, and Phillis saw that the crew consisted of Jack Dunquerque. Her heart gave a great leap, and she started from the Sleepy Hollow of her thoughts into life.

Jack Dunquerque was not an ideal oar, such as one dreams of and reads about. He did not 'grasp his sculls with the precision of a machine, and row with a grand long sweep which made the boat spring under his arms like a thing of life'—I quote from an author whose name I have forgotten. Quite the contrary; Jack was rather unskilful than otherwise; the ship in which he was embarked was not one of those crank craft consisting of half a cedar lath with cross-bars of iron; it was a boat without outriggers, and he had hired it at Richmond. He was not so straight in the back as an Oxford stroke; and he bucketed about a good deal, but he got along.

Just as he was nearing Phillis he fell into difficulties, in consequence of one oar catching tight in the weeds. The effect of this was, as may be imagined, to bring her bows on straight into the bank. In fact Jack ran the ship ashore, and sat with the bows high on the grass just a few inches off Phillis's feet. Then he drew himself upright, tried to disentangle the oar, and began to think what he should do next.

'I wish I hadn't come,' he said aloud.

Phillis laughed silently.

Then she noticed the painter in the bows, though she did not know it by that name. Painters in London boats are sometimes longish ropes, for convenience of mooring. Phillis noiselessly lifted the cord and tied it fast round the trunk of a small elder-tree beside her. Then she sat down again and waited. This was much better fun than watching an elderly gentleman tumbling backwards in a punt.

Jack, having extricated the scull and rested a little, looked at his palms, which were blistering under the rough exercise of rowing, and muttered something inaudible. Then he seized the oars again and began to back out vigorously.

The boat's bows descended a few inches, and then, the painter being taut, moved no more.

Phillis leaned forward, watching Jack with a look of rapturous delight.

'Damn the ship!' said Jack softly, after three or four minutes' strenuous backing.

'Don't swear at the boat, Jack,' Phillis broke in, with her low laugh and musical voice.

Jack looked round. There was his goddess standing on the bank, clapping her hands with

delight. He gave a vigorous pull, which drove the boat half-way up to shore, and sprang out.

'Jack, you must not use words that sound bad. O, how glad I am to see you! I think you look best in flannels, Jack.'

'You here, Phil? I thought it was a mile higher up.'

'Did you know where I was gone to?'

'Yes, I found out. I asked Colquhoun, and he told me. But he did not offer to introduce me to Mrs. L'Estrange; and so I thought I would—I thought that perhaps if I rowed up the river, you know, I might perhaps see you.'

'O Jack,' she replied, touched by this act of friendship, 'did you really row up in the hope of seeing me? I am so glad. Will you come in and be introduced to Agatha—that is, Mrs. L'Estrange? I have not yet told her about you, because we had so many things to say.'

'Let us sit down and talk a little first. Phil, you look even better than when you were at Carnarvon-square. Tell me what you are doing.'

'I am learning to read, for one thing; and, Jack, a much more important thing, I am taking lessons in water-colour drawing. I have learned a great deal already, quite enough to show me how ignorant

I have been. But, Jack, Mr. Stencil cannot draw so well as I can, and I am glad to think so.'

'When shall we be able to go out again for another visit somewhere, Phil?'

'Ah, I do not know. We shall stay here all the summer, I am sure; and Agatha talks of going to the seaside in the autumn. I do not think I shall like the sea so much as I like the river, but I want to see it. Jack, how is Mr. Gilead Beck? have you seen him lately?'

'Yes, I very often see him. We are great friends. But never mind him, Phil; go on telling me about yourself. It is a whole fortnight since I saw you.'

'Is it really? O Jack! and we two promised to be friends. There is pretty friendship for you! I am very happy, Jack. Agatha L'Estrange is so kind that I cannot tell you how I love her. Lawrence Colquhoun is her first cousin. I like my guardian, too, very much; but I have not yet found out how to talk with him. I am to have a horse as soon as he can find me one; and then we shall be able to ride together, Jack, if it is not too far for you to come out here.'

'Too far, Phil?'

'Agatha is writing letters. Certainly it must be

pleasant to talk to your friends when they are away from you. I shall learn to write as fast as I can, and then we will send letters to each other. I wonder if she would mind being disturbed. Perhaps I had better not take you in just yet.'

'Will you come for a row with me, Phil?'

'In the boat, Jack? on the river? O, if you will only take me!'

Jack untied the painter, pulled the ship's head round, and laid her alongside the bank.

'You will promise to sit perfectly still, and not move?'

'Yes, I will not move. Are you afraid for me, Jack?'

'A little, Phil. You see, if we were to upset, perhaps you would not trust yourself entirely to me.'

'Yes, I would, Jack. I am sure you would bring me safe to the bank.'

'But we must not upset. Now, Phil.'

He rowed her up-stream. She sat in the stern, and enjoyed the situation. As in every fresh experience, she was silent, drinking in the details. She watched the transparent water beneath her, and saw the yellow-green weeds sloping gently downwards with the current; she noticed the swans,

which looked so tranquil from the bank, and which now followed the boat, gobbling angrily. They passed the old gentleman in the punt. He had recovered his chair by this time, and was sitting in it, still fishing. But Phillis could not see that he had caught many fish. He looked from under his umbrella and saw them. 'Youth and Beauty,' he sighed.

'I like to *feel* the river,' said Phillis softly. 'It is pleasant on the bank, but it is so much sweeter here. Can there be anything in the world,' she murmured half to herself, 'more pleasant than to be rowed along the river on such a day as this?'

There was no one on the river except themselves and the old angler. Jack rowed up-stream for half a mile or so, and then turned her head and let her drift gently down with the current, occasionally dipping the oars to keep way on. But he left the girl to her own thoughts.

'It is all like a dream to me, this river,' said Phillis in a low voice. 'It comes from some unknown place, and goes to some unknown place.'

'It is like life, Phil.'

'Yes; we come like the river, trailing long glories behind us—you know what Wordsworth says—but we do not go to be swallowed up in the ocean,

and we are not alone. We have those that love us to be with us, and prevent us from getting sad with thought. I have you, Jack.'

'Yes, Phil.' He could not meet her face, which was so full of unselfish and passionless affection, because his own eyes were brimming over with passion.

'Take me in, Jack,' she said, when they reached Agatha's lawn. 'It is enough for one day.'

She led him to the morning-room, cool and sheltered, where Agatha was writing the letter we have already read. And she introduced him as Jack Dunquerque, her friend.

Jack explained that he was rowing up the river, that he saw Miss Fleming by accident, that he had taken her for a row up the stream, and so on—all in due form.

'Jack and I are old friends,' said Phillis.

Agatha did not ask how old, which was fortunate. But she put aside her letters and sent for tea into the garden. Jack became more amiable and more sympathetic than any young man Mrs. L'Estrange had ever known. So much did he win upon her that, having ascertained that he was a friend of Lawrence Colquhoun, she asked him to dinner.

Jack's voyage homeward was a joyful one.

Many is the journey begun in joy that ends in sorrow; few are those which begin, as Jack's bucketing up the river, in uncertainty, and end in unexpected happiness.

CHAPTER III.

'Souvent femme varie,
Bien fol qui s'y fie.'

Lawrence Colquhoun was not, in point of fact, devoting much thought to his ward at this time. She was pretty; she was fresh; she was unconventional; but then he was forty. For twenty years he had been moving through a panorama of pretty girls. It was hardly to be expected that a girl whom he had seen but once or twice should move a tough old heart of forty. Phillis pleased him, but lazy Lawrence wanted girls, if that could be managed, to come to him, and she necessarily stayed at Twickenham. Anyhow, she was in good and safe hands. It was enough to know that Agatha had her in safe charge and custody, and when he could find time he would go down and see her again. As he had been thirteen years trying to find time to visit Phillis at Highgate, it was possible that he might be in the same way prevented by adverse circumstances from going to Twickenham.

He was troubled also by other and graver matters.

Victoria Cassilis asked him in the Park to call upon her—for auld lang syne. What he replied is not on record, because, if anybody heard, it could only have been the lady. But he did not call upon her. After a day or two there came a letter from her. Of this he took no notice. It is not usual for a man to ignore the receipt of a letter from a lady, but Lawrence Colquhoun did do so. Then there came another. This also he tore in small pieces. And then another. 'Hang the woman,' said Lawrence; 'I believe she wants to have a row. I begin to be sorry I came home at all.'

His chambers were on the second floor in the Albany, and any one who knows Lawrence Colquhoun will understand that they were furnished in considerable comfort, and even luxury. He did not pretend to a knowledge of Art, but his pictures were good; nor was he a dilettante about furniture, but his was in good style. China he abhorred, like many other persons of sound and healthy taste. Let us leave a loophole of escape; there may be some occult reason, unknown to the uninitiated, for finding beauty, loveliness, and desirability in hideous china monsters and porcelain. After all we are but a flock, and follow

the leader. Why should we not go mad for china? It is as sensible as going mad over rinking. Why should we not buy water-colours at fabulous prices? At least these can be sold again for something, whereas books—an extinct form of madness—cannot; and besides, present their backs in a mute appeal to be read.

The rooms of a man with whom comfort is the first thing aimed at. The chairs are low, deep, and comfortable; there are brackets, tiny tables, and all sorts of appliances for saving trouble and exertion; the curtains are of the right shade for softening the light; the pictures are of subjects which soothe the mind; the books, if you look at them, are books of travel and novels. The place is exactly such a home as Lazy Lawrence would choose.

And yet when we saw his Laziness in the Prologue, he was living alone in a deserted city, among the bare wooden walls of a half-ruined hotel. But Lawrence was not then at home. He took what comfort he could get even there; and while he indulged his whim for solitude, impressed into his own service for his own comfort the two Chinamen who constituted with him the population of Empire City.

But at Empire City he was all day shooting. That makes a difference to the laziest of men. And

he would not have stayed there so long had he not been too lazy to go away. If a man does not mind lonely evenings, the air on the lower slopes of the Sierra Nevada is pleasant and the game is abundant. Now, however, he was back in London, where the laziest men live beside the busiest. The sun streamed in at his windows, which were bright with flowers; and he sat in the shade doing nothing. Restless men take cigars; men who find their own thoughts insufficient for the passing hour take books; men who cannot sit still walk about. Lawrence Colquhoun simply lay back in an easy-chair, watching the sunlight upon the flowers with lazy eyes. He had the gift of passive and happy idleness.

To him there came a visitor—a woman whom he did not know.

She was a woman about thirty years of age, a hard-featured sallow-faced woman. She looked in Lawrence's face with a grim curiosity as she walked across the room and handed him a letter.

'From Mrs. Cassilis, sir.'

'O!' said Lawrence. 'And you are—'

'I am her maid, sir.'

'Where is Janet, then?'

'Janet is dead. She died three years ago, before Mrs. Cassilis married.'

'O, Janet is dead, is she? Ah, that accounts—I mean, where did Janet die?'

'In lodgings at Ventnor, sir. Mrs. Cassilis—Miss Pengelley she was then, as you know, sir,'—Lawrence looked up sharply, but there was no change in the woman's impassive face as she spoke,—'Miss Pengelley sent me with her, and Janet died in my arms, sir, of consumption.'

'Ah, I am sorry! And so Mrs. Cassilis has sent you to me with this letter, has she?' He did not open it. 'Will you tell Mrs. Cassilis that I will send an answer by post, if there is any answer required?'

'I beg your pardon, sir; but Mrs. Cassilis told me expressly that if you were in town I was to wait for an answer, if I had to wait all day.'

'In that case I suppose I had better read the letter.'

He opened it, and it seemed as if the contents were not pleasant, because he rose from his chair and began to walk about. The sallow-faced woman watched him all the time as one who has fired a shot, and wishes to know whether it has struck, and where.

He held the letter in his left hand, and with his right moved and altered the position of things on

the mantelshelf, a sign of mental agitation. Then he turned round brusquely and said,

'Tell your mistress that I will call upon her in the afternoon.'

'Will you write that, sir?'

'No, I will not,' he replied fiercely. 'Take your answer and begone.'

She went without a word.

'There will be trouble,' she said to herself. 'Janet said it would all come up again some day. He's a handsome chap, and missus is a fool. She's worse than a fool; she's a hard-hearted creature, with no more blood than a stone statue. If there's to be trouble, it won't fall on *his* head, but on hern. And if I was him, I'd go away again quiet, and then maybe no one wouldn't find it out. As for her, she'll blow on it herself.'

Lawrence's thoughts assumed a form something like the following:

'Three notes from her in rapid succession, each one more vehement than the first. She must see me; she insists on my calling on her; she will see me; she has something important to tell me. It's a marvellous thing, and a great proof of the absence of the inventive faculty in all of them, that when they want to see you they invariably pretend that

they have something important to tell you. From the duchess to the nursemaid, by Jove, they are all alike! And now she is coming here unless I call upon her to-day.

'It won't do to let her come here. I might go down to the sea-side, go into the country, go anywhere, back to America; but what would be the good of that? Besides, why should I run away?

'I have not done anything to be afraid of or ashamed of, unless a knowledge of a thing is guilt. I have nothing to fear for myself. Remains the question, Ought I not to screen her?

'But screen her from whom? No one knows except Janet, and Janet is dead. Perhaps that woman with a face like a horse knows; that would be awkward for Victoria if she were to offend her, for a more damned unforgiving countenance I never set eyes upon. But Janet was faithful; I am sure Janet would not split even when she was dying. And then there was very little to split about when she died. Victoria hadn't married Mr. Cassilis.

'What the deuce does she want to rake up old things for? Why can't she let things be? It's the way of women. They can't forget; and hang me if I don't think she can't forgive me because she has done me a wrong! Why did I come back from

Empire City? There at all events one could be safe from annoyance.

'On a day like this too, the first really fine day of the season; and it's spoiled. I might have dined with cousin Agatha and talked to Phillis—the pretty little Phillis! I might have mooned away the afternoon in the Park and dined at the Club. I might have gone to half a dozen places in the evening. I might have gone to Greenwich and renewed my youth at the Ship. I might have gone to Richmond with old Evergreen and his party. But Phillis for choice. But now I must have it out with Victoria Cassilis. There's a fate in it. We can't be allowed to rest and be happy. Like the schoolboy's scrag-end of the roly-poly pudding, it is helped, and must be eaten.'

Philosophy brings resignation, but it does not bring ease of mind. Those unfortunate gentlemen who used to be laid upon the wheel and have their limbs broken might have contemplated the approach of inevitable suffering with resignation, but never with happiness. In Colquhoun's mind, Victoria Cassilis was associated with a disagreeable and painful chapter in his life. He saw her marriage in the fragment of Ladds' paper, and thought the chapter closed. He came home and found her waiting for him ready to open it again.

'I *did* think,' he said, turning over her letter in his fingers, 'that, for her own sake, she would have let things be forgotten. It's ruin for her if the truth comes out, and not pleasant for me. A pretty fool I should look explaining matters in a witness-box. But I must see her if only to bring her to reason. Reason! When was a woman reasonable?'

'I am here,' he said, standing before Mrs. Cassilis at her own house a few hours later. 'I am here.'

Athos, Porthos, Aramis, and D'Artagnan would have said exactly the same thing.

'*Me voici!*'

And they would have folded their arms and thrown back their heads with a preliminary tap at the sword-hilt, to make sure that the trusty blade was loose in the scabbard and easy to draw, in case M. le Mari—whom the old French allegorists called *Danger*—should suddenly appear.

But Lawrence Colquhoun said it quite meekly, to a woman who neither held out her hand nor rose to meet him, nor looked him in the face, but sat in her chair with bowed head and weeping eyes.

A woman of steel? There are no women of steel.

It was in Mrs. Cassilis's morning-room, an apartment sacred to herself; she used it for letter-writing,

for interviews with dre smakers, for tea with ladies, for all sorts of things. And now she received her old friend in it. But why was she crying, and why did she not look up?

'I *did* want to see you, Lawrence,' she murmured. 'Can you not understand why?'

'My name is Colquhoun, Mrs. Cassilis. And I cannot understand why—'

'My name, Lawrence, is Victoria. Have you forgotten that?'

'I have forgotten everything, Mrs. Cassilis. It is best to forget everything.'

'But if you cannot! O Lawrence,' she looked up in his face—'O Lawrence, if you cannot!'

Her weeping eyes, her tear-clouded face, her piteous gesture, moved the man not one whit. The power which she might once have had over him was gone.

'This is mere foolishness, Mrs. Cassilis. As a stranger, a perfect stranger, may I ask why you call me by my Christian name, and why these tears?'

'Strangers! it is ridiculous!' she cried, starting up and standing before him. 'It is ridiculous when all the world knows that we were once friends, and half the world thought that we were going to be something—nearer.'

'Nearer—and dearer, Mrs. Cassilis? What a foolish world it was! Suppose we had become nearer, and therefore very much less dear.'

'Be kind to me, Lawrence.'

'I will be whatever you like, Mrs. Cassilis,—except what I was,—provided you do not call me Lawrence any more. Come, let us be reasonable. The past is gone; in deference to your wishes I removed myself from the scene; I went abroad; I transported myself for four years: then I saw the announcement of your marriage in the paper by accident. And I came home again, because of your own free will and accord you had given me my release. Is this true?'

'Yes,' she replied.

'Then, in the name of Heaven, why seek to revive the past? Believe me, I have forgotten the few days of madness and repentance. They are gone. Some ghosts of the past come to me, but they do not take the shape of Victoria Pengelley.'

'Suppose we cannot forget?'

'Then we *must* forget. Victoria—Mrs. Cassilis, rouse yourself. Think of what you are—what you have made yourself.'

'I do think. I think every day.'

'You have a husband and a child; you have

your position in the world. Mrs. Cassilis, you have your honour.'

'My honour,' she echoed. 'What honour? And if all were known! Lawrence, don't you even pity me?'

'What is the good of pity?' he asked rudely. 'Pity cannot alter things. Pity cannot make things which are as if they are not. You seem to me to have done what you have done knowing well what you were doing, and knowing what you were going to get by it. You have got one of the very best houses in London; you have got a rich husband; you have got an excellent position; and you have got—Mrs. Cassilis, you have got a child, whose future happiness depends upon your reticence.'

'I will tell you what I have besides,' she burst in, with passion. 'I have the most intolerable husband, the most maddening and exasperating man in all the world!'

'Is he cruel to you?'

'No; he is kind to me. If he were cruel I should know how to treat him. But he is kind.'

'Heroics, Mrs. Cassilis. Most women could very well endure a kind husband. Are you not overdoing it? You almost make me remember a scene—call it a dream—which took place in a cer-

tain Glasgow hotel about four years and a half ago.'

'In the City he is the greatest financier living, I am told. In the house he is the King of Littleness.'

'I think there was—or is—a bishop,' said Lawrence meditatively, 'who gave his gigantic intellect to a Treatise on the Sinfulness of Little Sins. Perhaps you had better buy that work and study it. Or present it to your husband.'

'Very well, Lawrence. I suppose you think you have a right to laugh at me?'

'Right! Good God, Mrs. Cassilis,' he cried, in the greatest alarm, 'do you think I claim any right —the smallest—over you? If I ever had a right it is gone now—gone, by your own act, and my silence.'

'Yes, Lawrence,' she repeated, with a hard smile on her lips, 'your silence.'

He understood what she meant. He turned from her and leaned against the window, looking into the shrubs and laurels. She had dealt him a blow which took effect.

'My silence!' he murmured; 'my silence! What have I to do with your life since that day—that day which even you would find it difficult to forget? Do what you like, marry if you like, be as

happy as you like, or as miserable—what does it matter to me? My silence! Am I, then, going to proclaim to the world my folly and your shame?'

'Let us not quarrel,' she went on, pleased with the effect of her words. There are women who would rather stab a man in the heart, and so make some impression on him, than see him cold and callous to what they say or think. 'It is foolish to quarrel after four years and more of absence.'

'Absence makes the heart grow fonder,' said Lawrence. 'Yes, Mrs. Cassilis, it is foolish to quarrel. Still, I suppose it is old habit. And besides—'

'When a man has nothing else to say, he sneers.'

'When a woman has nothing else to say, she makes a general statement.'

'At all events, Lawrence, you are unchanged since I left you at that hotel to which you refer so often. Are its memories pleasing to you?'

'No; they are not. Are they to you? Come, Mrs. Cassilis, this is foolish. You told me you had something to say to me. What is it?'

'I wanted to say this. When we parted—'

'O, hang it!' cried the man, 'why go back to that?'

'When we two parted'—she set her thin lips together as if she was determined to let him off no

single word—' you used bitter words. You told me that I was heartless, cold, and bad-tempered. Those were the words you used.'

'By Gad, I believe they were!' said Lawrence. 'We had a blazing row; and Janet stood by with her calm Scotch face, and said, "Eh, sir! Eh, madam!" I remember.'

'I might retaliate on you.'

'You did then, Mrs. Cassilis. You let me have it in a very superior style. No need to retaliate any more.'

'I might tell you now that you are heartless and cold. I might tell you—'

'It seems that you are telling me all this without any use of the potential mood.'

'That if you have any lingering kindness for me, even if you have any resentment for my conduct, you would pity the lonely and companionless life I lead.'

'Your son is nearly a year old, I believe?'

'What is a baby?'

Lawrence thought the remark wanting in maternal feeling; but he said nothing.

'Come, Mrs. Cassilis, it is all no use. I cannot help you. I would not if I could. Hang it! it would be too ridiculous for me to interfere. Think of the situation. Here we are, we three; I first, you

in the middle, and Mr. Cassilis third. You and I know, and he does not suspect. On the stage, the man who does not suspect always looks a fool. No French novel comes anywhere near this position of things. Make yourself miserable if you like, and make me uncomfortable; but, for Heaven's sake, don't make us all ridiculous! As things are so you made them. Tell me—what did you do it for?'

'Speak to me kindly, Lawrence, and I will tell you all. After that dreadful day I went back to the old life. Janet and I made up something—never mind what. Janet was as secret as the grave. The old life—O, how stupid and dull it was! Two years passed away. You were gone, never to return, as you said. Janet died. And Mr. Cassilis came.'

'Well?'

'Well, I was poor. With my little income I had to live with friends, and be polite to people I detested. I saw a chance for freedom; Mr. Cassilis offered me that, at least. And I accepted him. Say you forgive me, Lawrence.'

'Forgive? What a thing to ask or to say!'

'It was a grievous mistake. I wanted a man who could feel with me and appreciate me.'

'Yes,' he said, 'I know. Appreciation—appreciation. Perhaps you got it, and at a truer estimate

than you thought. I have sometimes found, Mrs. Cassilis, in the course of my travels, people who make themselves miserable because others do not understand their own ideals. If these people could only label themselves with a few simple descriptive sentences,—such as "I am good; I am great; I am full of lofty thoughts; I am noble; I am wise; I am too holy for this world;" and so on,—a good deal of unhappiness might be saved. Perhaps you might even now try on this method with Mr. Cassilis.'

'Cold and sneering,' she said to herself, folding her hands, and laying her arms straight out before her in her lap. If you think of it, this is a most effective attitude, provided that the head be held well back and a little to the side.

'What astonishes me,' he said, taking no notice of her remark, 'is that you do not at all seem to realise the Thing you have done. Do you?'

'It is no use realising what cannot be found out. Janet is in her grave. Lawrence Colquhoun, the most selfish and heartless of men, is quite certain to hold his tongue.'

He laughed good-naturedly.

'Very well, Mrs. Cassilis, very well. If you are satisfied, of course no one has the right to say a word. After all, no one has any cause to fear except

yourself. For me, I certainly shall hold my tongue. It would be all so beautifully explained by Serjeant Smoothtongue: "Six years ago, gentlemen of the jury, a man no longer in the bloom of early youth was angled for and hooked by a lady who employed a kind of tackle comparatively rare in English society. She was a *femme incomprise*. She despised the little ways of women; she was full of infinite possibilities; she was going to lead the world if only she could get the chance. And then, gentlemen of the jury, then—"'

Here the door opened, and Mr. Gabriel Cassilis appeared. His wife was sitting in the window, cold, calm, and impassive. Some four or five feet from her stood Lawrence Colquhoun; he was performing his imaginary speech with great rhetorical power, but stopped short at sight of M. le Mari, whom he knew instinctively. This would have been a little awkward, had not Mrs. Cassilis proved herself equal to the occasion.

'My dear!' She rose and greeted her husband with the tips of her fingers. 'You are early to-day. Let me introduce Mr. Colquhoun, a very old friend of mine.'

'I am very glad, Mr. Colquhoun, to know you. I have heard of you.'

'Pray sit down, Mr. Colquhoun, unless you will go on with your description. Mr. Colquhoun, who has just returned from America, my dear, was giving me a vivid account of some American trial-scene which he witnessed.'

Her manner was perfectly cold, clear, and calm. She was an admirable actress, and there was not a trace left of the weeping shamefaced woman who received Lawrence Colquhoun.

Gabriel Cassilis looked at his visitor with a little pang of jealousy. This, then, was the man with whom his wife's name had been coupled. To be sure it was a censorious world; but then he was a handsome fellow, and a quarter of a century younger than himself. However, he put away the thought, and tapped his knuckles with his double-glasses while he talked.

To-day, whether from fatigue or from care, he was not quite himself; not the self-possessed man of clear business mind that he wished to appear. Perhaps something had gone wrong.

Lawrence and Mrs. Cassilis, or rather the latter, began talking about days of very long ago, so that her husband found himself out of the conversation. This made him uneasy, and less useful when the talk came within his reach. But his wife was con-

siderate—made allowances, so to speak, for age and fatigue; and Lawrence noted that he was fond and proud of her.

He came away in a melancholy mood.

'I can't help it,' he said. 'I wish I couldn't feel anything about it, one way or the other. Victoria has gone off, and I wonder how in the world— And now she has made a fool of herself. It is not my fault. Some day it will all come out. And I am an accessory after the fact. If it were not for that Phillis girl—I must see after her—and she is pretty enough to keep any man in town—I would go back to America again, if it were to Empire City.'

CHAPTER IV.

> 'Now you set your foot on shore
> In Novo Orbe; here's the rich Peru;
> And there, within, sir, are the golden mines,
> Great Solomon's Ophir.'

Unlimited credit! Wealth without bound! Power to gratify any desire—all desires! That was the Luck of the Golden Butterfly. No wish within the reach of man that Gilead Beck could not gratify. No project or plan within limits far, far beyond what are generally supposed reasonable that he could not carry out. Take your own case, brother of mine, struggling to realise the modest ambitions common to cultured humanity, and to force them within the bounds of a slender income. Think of the thousand and one things you want; think of the conditions of your life you would wish changed; think of the generous aspirations you would gratify; think of the revenges, malices, envies, hatreds, which you would be able to satiate—*had you the wealth which gives the power*. Then suppose yourself suddenly possessed of that wealth, and think what you would do with it.

Your brain is feeble; it falters at a few thousands; a hundred thousand a year is too much for it —it was as much, if I remember rightly, as even the imagination of the elder Dumas attained to. Beyond a paltry twenty thousand or so, one feels oppressed in imagination with a weight of income. Let us suppose you stick at twenty thousand. What would you do with it? What could you not do with it? Your ideal Society — the one thing wanting, only rich men cannot be brought to see it, to regenerate the world—that could instantly be put on a sound footing. Your works—those works which you keep locked up in a desk at home—you could publish, and at once step into your right position as a leader of thought, an ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν. Your projects educational, moral, theatrical, literary, musical, could all together, for they are modest, be launched upon the ocean of public opinion. You could gratify your taste for travel. Like Charles Kingsley, you could stand in the shadow of a tropical forest (it would not be one quarter so beautiful as a hundred glades ten miles from Southampton) and exclaim, 'At last!' You are an archæologist, and have as yet seen little. You could make that long-desired trip to Naples and see Pompeii; you could visit the cities of the Midi, and explore the Roman remains you have as yet only

read of; you could take that journey to Asia Minor, your dream of twenty years, and sketch the temples still standing, roofed and perfect, unvisited since the last stragglers of the last crusading army died of famine on the steps, scoffing with their latest breath at the desecrated altar. Their bones lay mouldering in front of the marble columns—silent monuments of a wasted enthusiasm—while the fleshless fingers pointed as if in scorn in the direction of Jerusalem. They have been dust this many a year. Dust blown about the fields; manure for the crops which the peasant raises in luxuriance by scratching the soil. But the temples stand still, sacred yet to the memory of Mother Earth, the many-breasted goddess of the Ephesians. Why, if you had that 20,000*l.* a year, you could go there, sketch, photograph, and dig.

What could not one do if one had money? And then one takes to thinking what is done by those who actually have it. Well, they subscribe—they give to hospitals and institutions—and they save the rest. Happy for this country that Honduras, Turkey, and a few other places exist to plunder the British capitalist, or we should indeed perish of wealth-plethora. Thousands of things all round us wait to be done; things which must be done by rich men, and cannot be done by trading men, because they would not pay.

Exempli gratia ; here are a few out of the many.

1. They are always talking of endowment for research ; all the men who think they ought to be endowed are clamouring for it. But think of the luxury of giving a man a thousand a year, and telling him to work for the rest of his days with no necessity for doing pot-boilers. Yet no rich man does it. There was a man in Scotland, the other day, gave half a million to the Kirk. For all the luxury to be got out of that impersonal gift, one might just as well drop a threepenny-bit into the crimson bag.

2. This is a country in which the dramatic instinct is so strong as to be second only to that of France. We want a National Theatre, where such a thing as a 300 nights' run would be impossible, and which should be a school for dramatists as well as actors. A paltry 10,000*l.* a year would pay the annual deficit in such a theatre. Perhaps, taking year with year, less than half that sum would do. No rich man has yet proposed to found, endow, or subsidise such a theatre.

3. In this City of London thousands of boys run about the streets ragged and hungry. Presently they become habitual criminals. Then they cost the country huge sums in gaols, policemen, and the like.

Philanthropic people catch a few of these boys and send them to places where they are made excellent sailors. Yet the number does not diminish. A small 15*l.* a year pays for a single boy. A rich man might support a thousand of them. Yet no rich man does.

4. In this country millions of women have to work for their living. Everybody who employs those women underpays and cheats them. Women cannot form trade-unions—they are without the organ of government; therefore they are downtrodden in the race. They do men's work at a quarter of men's wages. No trade so flourishing as that which is worked by women—witness the prosperity of dress-making masters. The workwomen have longer hours, as well as lower pay, than the men. At the best, they get enough to keep body and soul together; not enough for self-respect; not enough, if they are young and good-looking, to keep them out of mischief. To give them a central office and a central protecting power might cost a thousand pounds a year. No rich man, so far as I know, has yet come forward with any such scheme for the improvement of women's labour.

5. This is a country where people read a great deal. More books are printed in England than in

any other country in the world. Reading forms the amusement of half our hours, the delight of our leisure time. For the whole of its reading Society agrees to pay Mudie and Smith from three to ten guineas a house. Here is a sum in arithmetic: house-bills, 1500*l.* a year; wine-bill, 300*l.*; horses, 500*l.*; rent, 400*l.*; travelling, 400*l.*; dress—Lord knows what; reading—say 5*l.*; also, spent at Smith's stalls in two-shilling novels, say thirty shillings. That is the patronage of Literature. Successful authors make a few hundreds a year—successful grocers make a few thousands—and people say, 'How well is Literature rewarded!'

Mr. Gilead Beck once told me of a party gathered together in Virginia City to mourn the decease of a dear friend cut off prematurely. The gentleman intrusted with the conduct of the evening's entertainment had one-and-forty dollars put into his hands to be laid out to the best advantage. He expended it as follows:

Whisky . . .	Forty dollars.	(40$)
Bread. . . .	One dollar.	(1$)
Total . .	Forty-one dollars.	(41$)

'What, in thunder,' asked the chairman, 'made you waste all that money in bread?'

Note.—He had never read *Henry IV.*

The modern patronage of Literature is exactly like the proportion of bread observed by the gentleman of Virginia City.

Five pounds a year for the mental food of all the household.

Enough; social reform is a troublesome and an expensive thing. Let it be done by the societies; there are plenty of people anxious to be seen on platforms, and plenty of men who are rejoiced to take the salary of secretary.

Think again of Mr. Gilead Beck's Luck and what it meant. The wildest flights of your fancy never reached to a fourth part of his income. The yearly revenues of a Grosvenor fall far short of this amazing good fortune. Out of the bowels of the earth was flowing for him a continuous stream of wealth that seemed inexhaustible. Not one well, but fifty, were his, and all yielding. When he told Jack Dunquerque that his income was a thousand pounds a day, he was far within the limit. In these weeks he was clearing fifteen hundred pounds in every twenty-four hours. That makes forty-five thousand pounds a month; five hundred and forty thousand pounds a year. Can a Grosvenor or a Dudley reach to that?

The first well was still the best, and it showed

no signs of giving out; and as Mr. Beck attributed its finding to the direct personal instigation of the Golden Butterfly, he firmly believed that it never would give out. Other shafts had been sunk round it, but with varying success; the ground was covered with derricks and machinery erected for boring fresh wells and working the old; an army of men were engaged in these operations; a new town had sprung up in the place of Limerick City; and Gilead P. Beck, its King, was in London trying to learn how his money might best be spent.

It weighed heavily upon his mind; the fact that he was, by no effort of his own, through no merit of his own, earning a small fortune every week made him thoughtful. In his rough way he took the wealth as so much trust-money. He was entitled, he thought, to live upon it according to his inclination; he was to have what his soul craved for; he was to use it first for his own purposes; but he was to devote what he could not spend — that is, the great bulk of it—somehow to the general good. Such was the will of the Golden Butterfly.

I do not know how the idea came into Gilead Beck's head that he was to regard himself as a trustee. The man's antecedents would seem against such a conception of Fortune and her responsibilities.

Born in a New England village, educated till the age of twelve in a village school, he had been turned upon the world to make his livelihood in it as best he could. He was everything by turns; there was hardly a trade that he did not attempt, not a calling which he did not for a while follow. Ill luck attended him for thirty years; yet his courage did not flag. Every fresh attempt to escape from poverty only seemed to throw him back deeper in the slough. Yet he never despaired. His time would surely come. He preserved his independence of soul, and he preserved his hope.

But all the time he longed for wealth. The desire for riches is an instinct with the Englishman, a despairing dream with the German, a stimulus for hoarding with the Frenchman, but it is a consuming fire with the American. Gilead P. Beck breathed an atmosphere charged with the contagion of restless ambition. How many great men—presidents, vice-presidents, judges, orators, merchants—have sprung from the obscure villages of the older States! Gilead Beck started on his career with a vague idea that he was going to be something great. As the years went on he retained the belief, but it ceased to take a concrete form. He did not see himself in the chair of Ulysses Grant; he did not dream of becoming a

statesman or an orator. But he was going to be a man of mark. Somehow he was bound to be great.

And then came the Golden Butterfly.

See Mr. Beck now. It is ten in the morning. He has left the pile of letters, most of them begging-letters, unopened at his elbow. He has got the case of glass and gold containing the Butterfly on the table. The sunlight pouring in at the opened window strikes upon the yellow metal, and lights up the delicately-chased wings of this freak of Nature. Poised on the wire, the Golden Butterfly seems to hover of its own accord upon the petals of the rose. It is alive. As its owner sits before it, the creature seems to him endowed with life and motion. That is nonsense, but Mr. Beck thinks so at the moment.

On the table is a map of his Canadian oil-fields.

He sits like this nearly every morning, the gilded box before him. It is his way of consulting the oracle. After his interview with the Butterfly, he rises refreshed and clear of vision. This morning, if his thoughts could be written down, they might take this form:

'I am rich beyond the dreams of avarice. I have more than I can spend upon the indulgence of every whim that ever entered the head of sane man. When I have bought all the luxuries that the world

has to sell, there still remains to be saved more than any other living man has to spend.

'What am I to do with it?

'Shall I lay it up in the Bank? The Bank might break. That is possible. Or the well might stop. No; that is impossible. Other wells have stopped, but no well has run like mine, or will again; for I have struck through the crust of the earth into the almighty reservoir.

'How to work out this trust? Who will help me to spend the money aright? How is such a mighty pile to be spent?

'Even if the Butterfly were to fall and break, who can deprive me of my wealth?'

His servant threw open the door: 'Mr. Cassilis, sir.'

CHAPTER V.

'Doubtfully it stood,
As two spent swimmers that do cling together
And choke their art.'

One of Gilead Beck's difficulties—perhaps his greatest—was his want of an adviser. People in England who have large incomes pay private secretaries to advise them. The post is onerous, but carries with it considerable influence. To be a Great Man's whisperer is a position coveted by many. At present the only confidential adviser of the American Crœsus was Jack Dunquerque, and he was unsalaried and therefore careless. Ladds and Colquhoun were less ready to listen, and Gabriel Cassilis showed a want of sympathy with Mr. Beck's Trusteeship which was disheartening. As for Jack he treated the sacred Voice, which was to Gilead Beck what his demon was to Socrates, with profound contempt. But he enjoyed the prospect of boundless spending in which he was likely to have a disinterested share. Next to unlimited 'chucking' of his own money, the youthful Englishman would like—

what he never gets—the unlimited chucking of other people's. So Jack brought ideas, and communicated them as they occurred.

'Here is one,' he said. 'It will get rid of thousands; it will be a Blessing and a Boon for you; it will make a real hole in the Pile; and it's Philanthropy itself. Start a new daily.'

Mr. Beck was looking straight before him with his hands in his pockets. His face was clouded with the anxiety of his wealth. Who would wish to be a rich man?

'I have been already thinking of it, Mr. Dunquerque,' he said. 'Let us talk it over.'

He sat down in his largest easy-chair, and chewed the end of an unlighted cigar.

'I have thought of it,' he went on. 'I want a paper that shall have no advertisements and no leading articles. If a man can't say what he wants to say in half a column, that man may go to some other paper. I shall get only live men to write for me. I will have no long reports of speeches, and the bunkum of life shall be cut out of the paper.'

'Then it will be a very little paper.'

'No, sir. There is a great deal to say, once you get the right man to say it. I've been an editor myself, and I know.'

'You will not expect the paper to pay you?'

'No, sir; I shall pay for that paper. And there shall be no cutting up of bad books to show smart writing. I shall teach some of your reviews good manners.'

'But we pride ourselves on the tone of our reviews.'

'Perhaps you do, sir. I have remarked that Englishmen pride themselves on a good many things. I will back a first-class British subject for bubbling around against all humanity. See, Mr. Dunquerque, last week I read one of your high-toned reviews. There was an article in it on a novel. The novel was a young lady's novel. When I was editing the *Clearville Roarer* I couldn't have laid it on in finer style for the rough back of a Ward Politician. And a young lady!'

'People like it, I suppose,' said Jack.

'I daresay they do, sir. They used to like to see a woman flogged at the cart-tail. I am not much of a company man, Mr. Dunquerque; but I believe that when a young lady sings a song in a drawing-room, if that young lady sings out of tune it is not considered good manners to get up and say so. And it isn't thought polite to snigger and grin. And in my country, if a man was to invite the company to

make game of that young lady he would perhaps be requested to take a header through the window. Let things alone, and presently that young lady discovers that she is not likely to get cracked up as a vocaller. I shall conduct my paper on the same polite principles. If a man thinks he can sing and can't sing, let him be for a bit. Perhaps he will find out his mistake. If he doesn't, tell him gently. And if that won't do, get your liveliest writer to lay it on once for all. But to go sneakin' and pryin' around, pickin' out the poor trash, and cutting it up to make the people grin—it's mean, Mr. Dunquerque, it's mean. The cart-tail and the cat-o'-nine was no worse than this exhibition. I'm told it's done regularly, and paid for handsomely.'

'Shall you be your own editor?'

'I don't know, sir. Perhaps if I stay long enough in this city to get to the core of things, I shall scatter my own observations around. But that's uncertain.'

He rose slowly—it took him a long time to rise—and extended his long arms, bringing them together in a comprehensive way, as if he was embracing the universe.

'I shall have central offices in New York and London. But I shall drive the English team first. I shall have correspondents all over the world, and

I shall have information of every dodge goin', from an emperor's ambition to a tin-pot company bubble.'

He brought his fingers together with a clasp. Jack noticed how strong and bony those fingers were, with hands whose muscles seemed of steel.

The countenance of the man was earnest and solemn. Suddenly it changed expression, and that curious smile of his, unlike the smile of any other man, crossed his face.

'Did I ever tell you my press experiences?' he asked. 'Let us have some champagne, and you shall hear them.'

The champagne having been brought he told his story, walking slowly up and down with his hands in his pockets, and jerking out the sentences as if he was feeling for the most telling way of putting them.

Mr. Gilead Beck had two distinct styles of conversation. Generally, but for his American tone, the length of his sentences, and a certain florid wealth of illustration, you might take him for an Englishman of eccentric habits of thought. When he went back to his old experiences he employed the vernacular—rich, metaphoric, and full—which belongs to the Western States in the rougher period of their development. And this he used now.

'I was in Chicago. Fifteen years ago. I wanted

employment. Nobody wanted me. I spent most of the dollars, and thought I had better dig out for a new location, when I met one day an old schoolfellow named Rayner. He told me he was part proprietor of a morning paper. I asked him to take me on. He said he was only publisher, but he would take me to see the Editor, Mr. John B. Van Cott, and perhaps he would set me grinding at the locals. We found the Editor. He was a short active man of fifty, and he looked as cute as he was. Because you see, Mr. Dunquerque, unless you are pretty sharp on a Western paper, you won't earn your mush. He was keeled back, I remember, in a strong chair, with his feet on the front of the table, and a clip full of paper on his knee. And in that position he used to write his leading articles. Squelchers, some of them; made gentlemen of opposite politics cry, and drove rival editors to polishing shooting-irons. The floor was covered with exchanges. And there was nothing else in the place but a cracked stove, half a dozen chairs standing around loose, and a spittoon.

'I mention these facts, Mr. Dunquerque, to show that there was good standing-room for a free fight of not more than two.

'Mr. Van Cott shook hands, and passed me the tobacco-pouch, while Rayner chanted my praises.

When he wound up and went away, the Editor began.

"Wal, sir," he said, "you look as if you knew enough to go indoors when it rains, and Rayner seems powerful anxious to get you on the paper. A good fellow is Rayner; as white a man as I ever knew; and he has as many old friends as would make a good-sized city. He brings them all here, Mr. Beck, and wants to put every one on the paper. To hear him hold forth would make a camp-meeting exhorter feel small. But he's disinterested, is Rayner. It's all pure goodness."

'I tried to feel as if I wasn't down-hearted. But I was.

"Any way," I said, "if I can't get on here, I must dig out for a place nearer sundown. Once let me get a fair chance on a paper, and I can keep my end of the stick."

'The Editor went on to tell me what I knew already, that they wanted live men on the paper, fellows that would do a murder or a prize-fight right up to the handle. Then he came to business; offered me a triple execution just to show my style; and got up to introduce me to the other boys.

'Just then there was a knock at the door.

"That's Poulter, our local Editor," he said.

"Come in, Poulter. He will take you down for me."

'The door opened, but it wasn't Poulter. I knew that by instinct. It was a rough-looking customer with a black-dyed moustache, a diamond pin in his shirt-front, and a great gold chain across his vest; and he carried a heavy stick in his hand.

"Which is the one of you two that runs this machine?" he asked, looking from one to the other.

"I am the Editor," said Mr. Van Cott, "if you mean that."

"Then you air the Rooster I'm after," he went on. "I am John Halkett of Tenth Ward. I want to know what in thunder you mean by printing infernal lies about me and my party in your miserable one-hoss paper."

'He drew a copy of the paper from his pocket, and held it before the Editor's eyes.

"You know your remedy, sir," said Mr. Van Cott, quietly edging in the direction of the table, where there was a drawer.

"That's what I do know. That's what I'm here for. There's two remedies. One is that you retract all the lies you have printed; the other—"

"You need not tell me what the other is, Mr.

Halkett." As he spoke he drew open the drawer; but he hadn't time to take the pistol from it when the Ward Politician sprang upon him, and in a flash of lightning they were rolling over each other among the exchanges on the floor.

'If they had been evenly matched, I should have stood around to see fair. But it wasn't equal. Van Cott, you could see at first snap, was grit all through, and as full of fight as a game-rooster. But it was bulldog and terrier. So I hitched on to the stranger, and pulled him off by main force.

"You will allow me, Mr. Van Cott," I said, "to take this contract off your hands. Choose a back seat, sir, and see fair."

"Sail in," cried Mr. Halkett, as cheerful as a coot, "and send for the coroner, because he'll be wanted. I don't care which it is."

'That was the toughest job I ever had. The strength of ward politicians' opinions lies in their powers of bruising, and John Halkett, as I learned afterwards, could fight his weight in wild cats. Fortunately I was no slouch in those days.

'He met my advances half way. In ten minutes you couldn't tell Halkett from me, nor me from Halkett. The furniture moved around cheerfully, and there was a lovely racket. The sub-editors, printers,

and reporters came running in. It was a new scene for them, poor fellows, and they enjoyed it accordingly. The Editor they had often watched in a fight before, but here were two strangers worrying each other on the floor, with Mr. Van Cott out of it himself dodging around cheering us on. That gave novelty.

'The sharpest of the reporters had his flimsy up in a minute, and took notes of the proceedings.

'We fought that worry through. It lasted fifteen minutes. We fought out of the office; we fought down the stairs; and we fought on the pavement.

'When it was over, I found myself arrayed in the tattered remnants of my gray coat, and nothing else. John Halkett hadn't so much as that. He was bruised and bleeding, and he was deeply moved. Tears stood in his eyes as he grasped me by the hand.

"Stranger," he said, "will you tell me where you hail from?"

"Air you satisfied, Mr. Halkett," I replied, "with the editorial management of this newspaper?"

"I am," he answered. "You bet. This is the very best edited paper that ever ran. Good-morning, sir. You have took the starch out of John

Halkett in a way that no starch ever was took out of that man before. And if ever you get into a tight place, you come to me."

'They put him in a cab, and sent him home for repairs. I went back to the Editor's room. He was going on again with his usual occupation of manufacturing squelchers. The fragments of the chairs lay around him, but he wrote on unmoved.

"Consider yourself permanently engaged," he said. "The firm will pay for a new suit of clothes. Why couldn't you say at once that you were fond of fighting? I never saw a visitor tackled in a more lovable style. Why, you must have been brought up to it. And just to think that one might never have discovered your points if it hadn't been for the fortunate accident of John Halkett's call!"

'I said I was too modest to mention my tastes.

"Most fortunate it is. Blevins, who used to do our fighting—a whole team he was at it—was killed three months ago on this very floor; there's the mark of his fluid still on the wall. We gave Blevins a first-class funeral, and ordered a two-hundred-dollar monument to commemorate his virtues. We were not ungrateful to Blevins.

"Birkett came next," he went on, making corrections with a pencil stump. "But he was licked

like a cur three times in a fortnight. People used to step in on purpose to wallop Birkett, it was such an easy amusement. The paper was falling into disgrace, so we shunted him. He drives a cab now, which suits him better, because he was always gentlemanly in his ways.

"Carter, who followed, was very good in some respects, but he wanted judgment. He's in hospital with a bullet in the shoulder, which comes of his own carelessness. We can't take him on again any more, even if he was our style, which he never was."

"And who does the work now?" I ventured to ask.

"We have had no regular man since Carter was carried off on a shutter. Each one does a little, just as it happens to turn up. But I don't like the irregular system. It's quite unprofessional."

'I asked if there was much of that sort of thing.

"Depends on the time of year. It is the dull season just now, but we are lively enough when the fall elections come on. We sometimes have a couple a day then. You won't find yourself rusting. And if you want work, we can stir up a few editors by judicious writing. I'm powerful glad we made your acquaintance, Mr. Beck."

'That, Mr. Dunquerque, is how I became connected with the press.'

'And did you like the position?'

'It had its good points. It was a situation of great responsibility. People were continually turning up who disliked our method of depicting character, and so the credit of the paper mainly rested on my shoulders. No, sir; I got to like it, except when I had to go into hospital for repairs. And even that had its charms, for I went there so often that it became a sort of home, and the surgeons and nurses were like brothers and sisters.'

'But you gave up the post?' said Jack.

'Well, sir, I did. The occupation after all wasn't healthy, and a little too lively. The staff took a pride in me too, and delighted to promote freedom of discussion. If things grew dull for a week or two, they would scarify some ward ruffian just to bring on a fight. They would hang around there to see that ward ruffian approach the office, and they would struggle who should be the man to point me out as the gentleman he wished to interview. They were fond of me to such an extent that they could not bear to see a week pass without a fight. And I will say this of them, that they were as level a lot of boys as ever destroyed a man's character.

'Most of the business was easy. They came to see Mr. Van Cott, and they were shown up to me.

What there is of me takes up a good deal of the room. And when they'd put their case I used to open the door and point. "Git," I would say. "You bet," was the general reply; and they would go away quite satisfied with the Editorial reception. But once a week or so there would be a put-up thing, and I knew by the look of my men which would take their persuasion fighting.

'It gradually became clear to me that if I remained much longer there would be a first-class funeral, with me taking a prominent part in the procesh; and I began to think of digging out while I still had my hair on.

'One morning I read an advertisement of a paper to be sold. It was in the city of Clearville, Illinois, and it seemed to suit. I resolved to go and look at it, and apprised Mr. Van Cott of my intention.

"I'm powerful sorry," he said; "but of course we can't keep you if you will go. You've hoed your row like a square man ever since you came, and I had hoped to have had your valuable services till the end."

'I attempted to thank him, but he held up his hand, and went on thoughtfully.

"There's room in our plat at Rose-hill Cemetery for one or two more; and I had made up my mind to let you have one side of the monument all to

yourself. The sunny side too—quite the nicest nest in the plat. And we'd have given you eight lines of poetry—Blevins only got four, and none of the other fellows any. I assure you, Beck, though you may not think it, I have often turned this over in my mind when you have been in hospital, and I got to look on it as a settled thing. And now this is how it ends. Life is made up of disappointments."

'I said it was very good of him to take such an interest in my funeral, but that I had no yearning at present for Rose-hill Cemetery, and I thought it would be a pity to disturb Blevins. As I had never known him and the other boys, they mightn't be pleased if a total stranger were sent to join their little circle.

'Mr. Van Cott was good enough to say that they wouldn't mind it for the sake of the paper; but I had my prejudices, and I resigned.

'I don't know whether you visited Illinois when you were in America, Mr. Dunquerque; but if you did, perhaps you went to Clearville. It is in that part of the State which goes by the name of Egypt, and is so named on account of the benighted condition of the natives. It wasn't a lively place to go to, but still—

'The *Clearville Roarer* was the property of a

Mrs. Scrimmager, widow of the lately defunct editor. She was a fresh buxom widow of thirty-five, with a flow of language that would drown a town-council or a vestry. I inferred from this that the late Mr. Scrimmager was not probably very sorry when the time came for him to pass in his checks.

'She occupied the upper flats of a large square building, in the lower part of which were the offices of the paper. I inspected the premises, and having found that the books and plant were pretty well what the advertisement pretended, I closed the bargain at once, and entered into possession.

'The first evening I took tea with Mrs. Scrimmager.

"It must be more than a mite lonely for you," she said, as we sat over her dough-nuts and flipflaps, "up at the tavern. But you'll soon get to know all the leading people. They're a two-cent lot, the best of them. Scrimmy (we always called him Scrimmy for short) never cottoned to them. He used to say they were too low and common, mean enough to shoot a man without giving him a chance—a thing which Scrimmy, who was honourable from his boots up, would have scorned to do."

'I asked if it was long since her husband had taken his departure.

"He started," she said, "for kingdom come two months ago, if that's what you mean."

"Long ill?"

"Ill?" she replied, as if surprised at the question. "Scrimmy never was ill in his life. He was quite the wrong sort of stuff for that. Scrimmy was killed."

"Was he?" I asked. "Railway accident, I suppose?"

'Mrs. Scrimmager looked at me resentfully, as if she thought I really ought to have known better. Then she curved her upper lip in disdain.

"Railway accident! Not much. Scrimmy was shot."

"Terrible!" I ejaculated, with a nervous sensation, because I guessed what was coming.

"Well, it was rough on him," she said. "Scrimmy and Huggins of the *Scalper*—do you know Huggins? Well, you'll meet him soon enough for your health. They hadn't been friends for a long while, and each man was waiting to draw a bead on the other. How they did go for one another! As an ink-slinger, Huggins wasn't a patch on my husband; but Huggins was a trifle handier with his irons. In fact, Huggins has shot enough men to make a small graveyard of his own; and his special weakness is editors of your paper."

'I began to think that Clearville was not altogether the place for peace and rest. But it was too late now.

'The lady went on:

"Finally, Scrimmy wrote something that riled Huggins awful. So he sent him a civil note, saying that he'd bore a hole in him first chance. I've got the note in my desk there. That was gentlemanlike, so far; but he spoiled it all by the mean sneaking way he carried it through. Scrimmy, who was wonderful careless and never would take my advice, was writing in his office when Huggins crept in quiet, and dropped a bullet through his neck before he had time to turn. Scrimmy knew it was all up; but he was game to the last, and finished his article, giving the *Scalper* thunder. When he'd done it he came up-stairs and died."

"And Mr. Huggins?"

"They tried him; but, Lord, the jury were all his friends, and they brought it in justifiable homicide. After the funeral Huggins behaved handsome; he put the *Scalper* into deep mourning, and wrote a beautiful send-off notice, saying what a loss the community had suffered in Scrimmy's untimely end. I've got the article in my desk, and I'll show it to you; but somehow I never could bring myself to be friends with Huggins after it."

"Mr. Scrimmager was perhaps not the only editor who has fallen a victim in Clearville."

"The only one? Not by a long chalk," she replied. "The *Roarer* has had six editors in five years; they've all been shot except one, and he died of consumption. His was a very sad case. A deputation of leading citizens called to interview him one evening; he took refuge on the roof of the office, and they kept him there all night in a storm. He died in two months after it. But he was a poor nervous critter, quite unfit for his position."

"And this," I thought, "this is the place I have chosen for a quiet life."

'I debated that night with myself whether it would be better to blow the roof off my head at once, instead of waiting for Huggins or some other citizen to do it for me. But I resolved on waiting a little.

'Next day I examined the files of the *Roarer*, and found that it had been edited with great vigour and force; there was gunpowder in every article, fire and brimstone in every paragraph. No wonder, I thought, that the men who wrote those things were chopped up into sausage-meat. I read more, and it seemed as if they might as well have set themselves up as targets at once. I determined on changing the tone of the paper; I would no longer call people

midnight assassins and highway robbers; nor would I hint that political opponents were all related to suspended criminals. I would make the *Roarer* something pure, noble, and good; I would take Washington Irving for my model; it should be my mission to elevate the people.

'Wal, sir, I began. I wrote for my first number articles as elevating as Kentucky whisky. Every sentence was richly turned; every paragraph was as gentle as if from the pen of Goldsmith. There was a mutiny among the compositors; they were unaccustomed to such language, and it made them feel small. One man, after swearing till the atmosphere was blue, laid down his stick in despair and went and got drunk. And the two apprentices fought over the meaning of a sentence in the back yard. One of those boys is now a cripple for life.

'It would have been better for me, a thousand times better, if I had stuck to the old lines of writing. The people were accustomed to that. They looked for it, and they didn't want any elevating. If you think of it, Mr. Dunquerque, people never do. The Clearville roughs liked to be abused, too, because it gave them prominence and importance. But my pure style didn't suit them, and, as it turned out, didn't suit me either.

'The City Marshal was the earliest visitor after the issue of my first number. He came to say that, as the chief executive officer of the town, he would not be responsible for the public peace if I persevered in that inflammatory style. I told him I wouldn't change it for him or anybody else. Then he said it would cause a riot, and he washed his hands of it, and he'd done his duty.

'Next came the Mayor with two town-councillors.

"What, in thunder, do you think you mean, young man," his honour began, pointing to my last editorial, "by bringing everlasting disgrace on our town with such mush as that?"

'He called it mush.

'I asked him what was wrong in it.

"Wrong? It is all wrong. Of all the mean and miserable twaddle—"

'He called it miserable twaddle.

"Hold on, Mr. Mayor," I said; "we must discuss this article in a different way. Which member of your august body does the heavy business?"

"We all take a hand when it's serious," he replied; "but in ordinary cases it's generally understood that I do the municipal fighting myself."

"We'll consider this an ordinary case, Mr.

Mayor," I said; and I went for that chief magistrate. He presently passed through the window—the fight had no details of interest—and then the town-councillors shook hands with me, congratulated me on my editorial, and walked out quiet through the door.

'Nearly a dozen Egyptians dropped in during the afternoon to remonstrate. I disposed of them in as gentlemanlike a manner as possible. Towards evening I was growing a little tired, and thinking of shutting up for the day, when my foreman, whom the day's proceedings had made young again—such is the effect of joy—informed me that Mr. Huggins of the *Scalper* was coming down the street. A moment later, Mr. Huggins entered. He was a medium-sized man, with sharp piercing eyes and a well-bronzed face, active as a terrier and tough as a hickory-knot. I was sitting in the wreck of the office-desk, but I rose as he came in.

"Don't stir," he said pleasantly. "My name is Huggins; but I am not going to kill you to-day."

'I said I was much obliged to him.

"I see you've been receiving visitors," he went on, looking at the fragments of the chairs. "Ours, Mr. Beck, is an active and a responsible profession."

'I said I thought it was.

"These people have been pressing their arguments home with unseemly haste," he said. "It is unkind to treat a stranger thus. Now as for me, I wouldn't draw on you for your first article not to be made Governor of Illinois. It would be most unprofessional. Give a man a fair show, I say."

"Very good, Mr. Huggins."

"At the same time, Mr. Beck, I *do* think you've laid yourself open. You are reckless, not to say insulting. Take my case. You never saw me before, and you've had the weakness to speak of me as the gentlemanly editor of the *Scalper*."

"I'm sure, Mr. Huggins, if the term is offensive—"

"Offensive? Of course it is offensive. But as this is our first interview, I must not let my dander rise."

"Let it rise by all means, and stay as high as it likes. We may find a way of bringing it down again."

"No, no," he answered, smiling; "it would be unprofessional. Still I must say that your sneaking, snivelling city way of speaking will not go down, and I have looked in to tell you that it must not be repeated."

"It shall not be repeated, Mr. Huggins. I shall

never again make the mistake of calling you a gentleman."

'He started up like a flash, and moved his hand to his breast-pocket.

"What do you mean by that?"

'I was just in time, as I sprang upon and seized him by both arms before he could draw his pistol.

"I mean this," I said: "you've waked up the wrong passenger this time, Mr. Huggins. You needn't wriggle. I've been chucking people through that window all day, and you shall end the lot. But first I want that shooting-iron; it might go off by accident and hurt some one badly."

'It was a long and mighty heavy contract, for he was as supple as an eel and as wicked as a cat. But I got the best holt at last, relieved him of his pistol, and tossed him through the window.

"Jim," I said to the foreman, as I stretched myself in a corner, panting and bleeding, "you can shut up. We sha'n't do any more business to-day."

'I issued two more numbers of the *Roarer* on the same refined and gentlemanly principle, and I fought half the county. But all to no purpose. Neither fighting nor writing could reform those Egyptians.

'Huggins shot me through the arm one evening as I was going home from the office. I shall carry

his mark to the grave. Three nights later I was waited on by about thirty leading citizens, headed by the Mayor. They said they thought Clearville wasn't agreeing with me, and they were come to remove me. I was removed on a plank, escorted by a torchlight procesh of the local fire-brigade. On the platform of the railway-station the Mayor delivered a short address. He said, with tears, that the interests of party were above those of individuals, and that a change of residence was necessary for me. Then he put into my hands a purse with two hundred dollars, and we parted with every expression of mutual esteem.

'That is how I came up out of the land of Egypt, Mr. Dunquerque; and that is the whole history of my connection with the press.'

CHAPTER VI.

'We do not know
How she may soften at the sight o' the child.'

If life was pleasant in Carnarvon-square, it was far more pleasant by the banks of the river. Phillis expanded like a rose in June under the sweet and gracious influences with which Agatha L'Estrange surrounded her. Her straightforward way of speaking remained—the way that reminded one of a very superior schoolboy who had *not* been made a prig at Rugby—but it was rounded off by something more of what we call maidenly reserve. It should not be called reserve at all; it is an atmosphere with which women have learned to surround themselves, so that they show to the outward world like unto the haloed moon. Its presence was manifested in a hundred little ways—she did not answer quite so readily; she did not look into the face of a stranger quite so frankly; she seemed to be putting herself more upon her guard—strange that the chief charm of women should be a relic of barbarous times, when the

stronger sex were to be feared for their strength and the way in which they often used it. Only with Jack Dunquerque there was no change. With him she was still the frank free-hearted girl, the friend who opened all her heart, the maiden who, alone of womankind, knew not the meaning of love.

Phillis was perfectly at home with Agatha L'Estrange. She carolled about the house like a bird; she played and sang at her sweet will; she made sketches by thousands; and she worked hard at the elements of all knowledge. Heavens, by what arid and thirsty slopes do we climb the hills of Learning! Other young ladies had made the house by the river their temporary home, but none so clever, none so bright, none so entirely lovable as this emancipated cloister-child. She was not subdued, as most young women somehow contrive to become; she dared to have an opinion and to assert it; she did not tremble and hesitate about acting before it had been ascertained that action was correct; she had not the least fear of compromising herself; she hardly knew the meaning of proper and improper; and she who had been a close prisoner all her life was suddenly transformed into a girl as free as any of Diana's nymphs. Her freedom was the result of her ignorance; her courage was the result

of her special training, which had not taught her the subjection of the sex; her liberty was not license, because she did not, and could not, use it for those purposes which schoolgirls learn in religious boarding-houses. She could walk with a curate, and often did, without flirting with the holy young man; she could make Jack Dunquerque take her for a row upon the river, and think of nothing but the beauty of the scene, her own exceeding pleasure, and the amiable qualities of her companion.

Of course Agatha's friends called upon her. Among them were several specimens of the British young lady. Phillis watched them with much curiosity, but she could not get on with them. They seemed mostly to be suffering from feeble circulation of the pulse; they spoke as if they enjoyed nothing; those who were very young kindled into enthusiasm in talking over things which Phillis knew nothing about, such as dancing—Phillis was learning to dance, but did not yet comprehend its fiercer joys—and sports in which the other sex took an equal part. Their interest was small in painting; they cared for nothing very strongly; their minds seemed for the most part as languid as their bodies. This life at low ebb seemed to the girl whose blood coursed freely, and tingled in her veins as it ran, a

poor thing; and she mentally rejoiced that her own education was not such as theirs. On the other hand, there were points in which these ladies were clearly in advance of herself. Phillis felt the cold ease of their manner; that was beyond her efforts; a formal and mannered calm was all she could assume to veil the intensity of her interest in things and persons.

'But what do they like, Agatha?' she asked one day, after the departure of two young ladies of the highest type.

'Well, dear, I hardly know. I should say that they have no strong likings in any direction. After all, Phillis dear, those who have the fewest desires enjoy the greatest happiness.'

'No, Agatha, I cannot think that. Those who want most things can enjoy the most. O, that level line! what can shake them off it?'

'They are happier as they are, dear. You have been brought up so differently that you cannot understand. Some day they will marry. Then the equable temperament in which they have been educated will stand them in good stead with their husbands and their sons.'

Phillis was silent, but she was not defeated.

Of course the young ladies did not like her at all.

They were unequal to the exertion of talking to a girl who thought differently from all other girls. Phillis to them, as to all people who are weak in the imaginative faculty, was *impossible*.

But bit by bit the social education was being filled in, and Phillis was rapidly becoming ready for the *début* to which Agatha looked forward with so much interest and pride.

There remained another kind of education.

Brought up alone, with only her maid of her own age, and only an old man on whom to pour out her wealth of affection, this girl would, but for her generous nature, have grown up cold and unsympathetic. She did not. The first touch of womanly love which met her in her escape from prison was the kiss which Agatha L'Estrange dropped unthinkingly upon her cheek. It was the first of many kisses, not formal and unmeaning, which were interchanged between these two. It is difficult to explain the great and rapid change the simple caresses of another woman worked in Phillis's mind. She became softer, more careful of what she said, more thoughtful of others. She tried harder to understand people; she wanted to be to them all what Agatha L'Estrange was to her.

One day, Agatha, returning from early church,

whither Phillis would not accompany her, heard her voice in the kitchen. She was singing and laughing. Agatha opened the door and looked in.

Phillis was standing in the middle of a group. Her eyes were bright with a sort of rapture; her lips were parted; her long hair was tossing behind her; she was singing, talking, and laughing, all in a breath.

In her arms she held the most wonderful thing to a woman which can be seen on this earth.

A Baby.

The child of the butter-woman. The mother stood before Phillis, her pleased red face beaming with an honest pride. Phillis's maid, Antoinette, and Agatha's three servants surrounded these two, the principal figures. In the corner, grinning, stood the coachman. And the baby crowed and laughed.

'O, the pretty thing! O, the pretty thing!' cried Phillis, tossing the little one-year-old, who kicked and laughed and pulled at her hair. 'Was there ever such a lovely child? Agatha, come and see, come and see! He talks, he laughs, he dances!'

'Ah, madame!' said Antoinette, wiping away a sympathetic tear. 'Dire que ma'amselle n'en a jamais vu! Mais non, mais non—pas même des poupées!'

CHAPTER VII.

'Go seek your fortunes farther than at home.'

Lawrence Colquhoun returned home to find himself famous. Do you remember a certain book of travels written four or five years ago by Lord Milton and Dr. Cheadle, in which frequent mention was made of *un nommé* Harris, an inquiring and doubting Christian, who wore a pair of one-eyed spectacles, and carried a volume of Paley? If that Harris, thus made illustrious, had suddenly presented himself in a London drawing-room while the book was enjoying its first run, he would have met with much the same success which awaited Lawrence Colquhoun. Harris let his opportunity go, and never showed up; perhaps he is still wandering in the Rocky Mountains and pondering over Paley. But Colquhoun appeared while the work of the Dragoon and the Younger Son was still in the mouths of men and women. The liveliest thing in that book is the account of Empire City and its Solitary. Everybody whose memory can carry him back to last year's reading will remem-

ber so much. And everybody who knew Colquhoun knew also that he was the Solitary.

The Hermit; the man with the Golden Butterfly, now a millionaire; the Golden Butterfly, now in a golden cage—all these actually present, so to speak, in the flesh, and ready to witness if the authors lied. Why, each was an advertisement of the book, and if the two Chinamen had been added, probably people might be reading the work still. But they, poor fellows, were defunct.

It annoyed Lawrence at first to find himself, like Cambuscan, with his tale half told; and it was monotonous to be always asked whether it was really true, and if he was the original Hermit. But everything wears off; people in a week or two began to talk of something else, and when Colquhoun met a man for the first time after his return he would startle and confuse that man by anticipating his question. He knew the outward signs of its approach. He would watch for the smile, the look of curiosity, and the parting of the lips before they framed the usual words:

'By the way, Colquhoun, is it actually true that you are the Hermit in Jack Dunquerque's book?'

And while the questioner was forming the sen-

tence, thinking it a perfectly original one never asked before, Lawrence would answer it for him.

'It is perfectly true that I was the Hermit. Now talk of something else.'

For the rest he dropped into his old place. Time, matrimony, good and evil hap had made havoc among his set; but there were still some left. Club-men come and club-men go; but the club goes on for ever.

Colquhoun had the character of being at once the laziest and the most good-natured of men. A dangerous reputation, because gratitude is a heavy burden to bear. If you do a man a good turn he generally finds it too irksome to be grateful, and so becomes your enemy. But Colquhoun cared little about his reputation.

When he disappeared, his friends for a day or two wondered where he was. Then they ceased to talk of him. Now he was come back they were glad to have him among them again. He was a pleasant addition. He was not altered in the least—his eyes as clear from crows-feet, his beard as silky, and his face as cheerful as ever. Some men's faces have got no sun in them; they only light up with secret joy at a friend's misfortunes: but that is an artificial fire, so to speak; it burns with a baleful and lurid

light. There are others whose faces are like the weather in May, being uncertain and generally disagreeable. But Lawrence Colquhoun's face always had a cheerful brightness. It came from an easy temper, a good digestion, a comfortable income, and a kindly heart.

Of course he made haste to find out Gilead Beck. Jack Dunquerque, who forgot at the time to make any mention of Phillis Fleming, informed him of the Golden Butterfly's wonderful Luck. And they all four dined together—the Hermit, the Miner, the Dragoon, and the Younger Son.

They ran the Bear Hunt over again; they talked of Empire City, and speculated on the two Chinamen; had they known the fate of the two, their speculations might have taken a wider range.

'It was rough on me that time,' said Gilead. 'It had never been so rough before, since I began bumming around.'

They waited for more, and presently he began to tell them more. It was the way of the man. He never intruded his personal experiences, being for the most part a humble and even a retiring man; but when he was among men he knew, he delighted in his recollections.

'Thirty-three years ago since I began. Twelve

years old; the youngest of the lot. And I wonder where the rest are. Hiram, I know, sat down beside a rattle one morning. He remembered he had an appointment somewhere else, and got up in a hurry. But too late, and his constitution broke up suddenly. But for the rest I never did know what became of them. When I go back with that almighty Pile of mine, they will find me out, I daresay. Then they will bring along all their friends and the rest of the poor relations. The poorer the relations in our country, the more affectionate and self-denying they are.'

'What did you do first?' asked Ladds.

'Ran messages; swept out stores; picked up trades; went handy boy to a railway engineer; read what I could and when I could. When I was twenty I kept a village school at a dollar a day. That was in Ohio. I've been many things in my pilgrimage and tried to like them all, but that was most too much for me. Boys *and* gells, Captain Ladds. Boys themselves are bad; but boys and gells mixed, they air—wal, it's a curious and interestin' thing that, ever since that time, when I see the gells snoopin' around, with their eyes as soft as velvet and their sweet cheeks the colour of peach, I say to myself, "Shoddy. It is shoddy. I've seen you at school,

and I know you better than you think." As the poet says, "Let gells delight to bark and bite, for 'tis their nature to." You believe, Mr. Dunquerque, because you are young and inexperienced, that gells air soft. Air they? Soft as the shell of a clam. And tender? Tender as a hickory-nut. Air they gentle, unselfish, and yieldin'? As rattlesnakes. The child is mother to the woman, as the poet says; and school-gells grow up mostly into women. They're sweet to look at; but when you've tended school, you feel to know them. And then you don't yearn after them so much.

'There was one boy I liked. He was eighteen, stood six foot high in his stocking-boots, and his name was Pete Conkling. The lessons that boy taught me were useful in my after-life. We began it every morning at five minutes past nine. Any little thing set us off. He might heave a desk, or a row of books, or the slates of the whole class at my head. I might go for him first. It was uncertain how it began, but the fight was bound to be fought. The boys expected it, and it pleased the gells. Sometimes it took me half an hour, and sometimes the whole morning, to wallop that boy. When it was done, Pete would take his place among the little gells, for he never could learn anything, and

school would begin. To see him after it was over sitting alongside of little Hepzibah and Keziah, as meek as if he'd never heard of a black eye and never seen the human fist, was one of my few joys. I was fond of Pete, and he was fond of me. Ways like his, gentlemen, kinder creep round the heart of the lonely teacher. Very fond of him I grew. But I got restless and dug out for another place; it was when I went on the boards and became an actor, I think; and it was close on fifteen years afterwards that I met him. Then he was lying on the slopes of Gettysburg—it was after the last battle—and his eyes were turned up to the sky; one of them, I noticed, was black; so that he had kept up his fighting to the end. For he was stark dead, with a Confed. bullet in his heart. Poor Pete!'

'You fought for the North?' asked one of his audience.

'I *was* a Northerner,' he replied simply. How could he help taking his part in maintaining undivided that fair realm of America, which every one of his countrymen love as Queen Elizabeth's yeomen loved the realm of England? We have no yeomen now, which is perhaps one of the reasons why we could not understand the cause of the North.

'I worried through that war without a scratch.

We got wary towards the end, and let the bullets drop into trunks of trees for choice. And when it was over, I was five-and-thirty, and had to begin the world again. But I was used to it.'

'And you enjoyed a wandering life?'

'Yes, I believe I did enjoy barkin' up a new tree. There's a breed of Americans who can't keep still. I belong to that breed. We do not like to sit by a river and watch the water flow; we get tired of livin' in the village lookin' in each other's faces while the seasons come round like the hands of a clock. There's a mixture among us of Dutch and German and English to sit quiet and till the ground. They get their heels well grounded in the clay, and there they stick.'

'Where do you get it from, the wandering blood?' asked Colquhoun.

Gilead P. Beck became solemn.

'There air folk among us,' he whispered, 'who hold that we are descended from the Ten Tribes. I don't say those folk are right, but I do say that it sometimes looks powerful like as if they were. Descended from the Ten Tribes, they say, and miraculously kept separate from the English among whom they lived. Lost their own language—which, if it was Hebrew, I take it was rather a good thing to be

quit of—and speakin' English, like the rest. What were the tribes? Wanderers, mostly. Father Abraham went drivin' his cows and his camels up and down the country. Isaac went around on the rove, and Jacob couldn't sit still. Very well then. Didn't their children walk about, tryin' one location after another, for forty years, and always feelin' after a bit as if there must be a softer plank farther on? And when they'd been settled down for a few hundred years, didn't they get up and disappear altogether? Mark you, they *didn't want* to settle. And where are the Ten Tribes now? For they never went back; you may look Palesteen through and through, and nary a Tribe.'

He looked round asking the question generally, but no one ventured to answer it.

'Our folk, who have mostly gut religion, point to themselves. They say, "Look at us; we air the real original Wanderers." Look at us all over the world. What are the hotels full of? Full of Amer'cans. We are everywhere. We eat up the milk and the honey, and we tramp off on the ramble again. But there's more points of gen'ral resemblance. We like bounce and bunkum; so did those people down in Syria: we like to pile up the dollars; so did the Jews: they liked to set up their kings and

pull them down again; we pursue the same generous and confiding policy with our presidents: and if they were stiff-necked and backsliding, we are as stiff-necked and backsliding as any generation among all the lot.'

'A very good case indeed,' said Colquhoun.

'I did not think so, sir, till lately. But it's been borne in upon me with a weight and force that can't be resisted, and I believe it now. The lost Ten Tribes, gentlemen, air now located in the States. I am certain of it from my own case. Do any of you think—I put it to you seriously—that such an inseek as the Golden Butterfly would have been thrown away upon an outsider? Is it likely that such all-fired Luck as mine would have been wasted on a man who didn't belong to the Chosen People? No, sir; I am of the children of Israel; and I freeze to that.'

CHAPTER VIII.

'Animum picturâ pascit inani.'

When Panurge was in that dreadful difficulty of his about marrying he took counsel of all his friends. Pantagruel, as we know, advised him alternately for and against, according to the view taken at the moment by his versatile dependent. Gilead Beck was so far in Panurge's position that he asked advice of all his friends. Mr. Cassilis recommended him to wait and look about him; meantime, he took his money for investment; and, as practice makes perfect, and twice or thrice makes a habit, he found now no difficulty in making Mr. Beck give him cheques without asking their amount or their object, while the American Fortunatus easily fell into the habit of signing them without question. He was a Fool? No doubt. The race is a common one; especially common is that kind of Fool which is suspicious from long experience, but which, having found, as he thinks, a fellow-creature worthy of trust, places entire and perfect trust in him, and so,

like a ship riding at anchor with a single stout cable, laughs at danger even while the wind is blowing, beam on, to a lee shore. Perfect faith is so beautiful a thing that neither religionists who love to contemplate it, nor sharpers who profit by it, would willingly let it die out.

Lawrence Colquhoun recommended pictures.

'You may as well spend your money on Artists as on any other people. They are on the whole a pampered folk, and get much too well paid. But a good picture is generally a good investment. And then you will become a Patron and form a gallery of your own, the Beck Collection, to hand down to posterity.'

'I can't say, Colonel—not with truth—that I know a good picture from a bad one. I once tried sign-painting. But the figures didn't come out right, somehow. Looked easy to do, too. Seems I didn't know about Perspective, and besides, the colours got mixed. Sign-painting is not a walk in life that I should recommend from personal experience.'

But the idea took root in his brain.

Jack Dunquerque encouraged it.

'You see, Beck,' he said, 'you may as well form a gallery of paintings as anything else. Buy modern

pictures; don't buy Old Masters, because you will be cheated. The modern pictures will be old in a hundred years, and then your collection will be famous.'

'I want to do my work in my own lifetime,' said the millionaire. He was a man of many ideas but few convictions, the strongest being that man ought to do what he has to do in his own lifetime, and not to devise and bequeath for posthumous reputation.

'Why, and so you would. You buy the pictures while you are living; when you go off, the pictures remain.'

A patron of Art. The very name flattered his vanity, being a thing he had read of, and his imagination leaped up to the possibilities of the thing. Why should he not collect for his own country? He saw himself, like Stewart, returning to New York with a shipload of precious Art treasures bought in London; he saw his agent ransacking the studios and shops of Florence, Naples, Rome, Dresden—wherever painters congregate and pictures are sold; he imagined rich argosies coming to him across the ocean—the American looks across the ocean for the luxuries and graces of life, his wines, his Art, and his literature. Then he saw a great building,

grander than the Capitol at Washington, erected by a grateful nation for the reception of the Gilead P. Beck Collection of Ancient and Modern Paintings.

Now one of the earliest callers upon Mr. Beck was a certain picture-dealer named Burls. Mr. Burls and his fraternity regard rich Americans with peculiar favour. It is said to have been Bartholomew Burls who invented especially for American use the now well-known 'multiplication' dodge. The method is this. You buy a work by a rising artist, one whose pictures may be at some future time, but are not yet, sufficiently known to make their early wanderings matter of notoriety. One of your young men—he must be a safe hand and a secret—makes two, three, or four copies, the number depending on the area, rather than the number, of your *clientèle*. You keep the artist's receipt, a proof of the genuineness of the picture. The copies, name and all, are so well done that even the painter himself would be puzzled to know his own. You then proceed to place your pictures at good distances from each other, representing each as genuine. It is a simple, beautiful, and lucrative method. Not so profitable, perhaps, as cleaning old oil-paintings, which takes half an hour apiece and is charged from ten shillings to ten pounds, according to the dealer's belief in your

power to pay. Nor is it more profitable than the manufacture of a Correggio or a Cuyp for a guileless cotton manufacturer, and there is certainly a glow of pride to be obtained by the successful conversion of a new into an old picture by the aid of mastic varnish, mixed with red and yellow lake to tone it down, and the simple shaking of a door-mat over it. But then people have grown wary, and it is difficult to catch a purchaser of a Correggio, for which a large sum has to be asked. The multiplication dodge is the simpler and the safer.

Mr. Beck, as has been already shown, was by no means deficient in a certain kind of culture. He had read such books as fell in his way during his wandering and adventurous life. His reading was thus miscellaneous. He had been for a short time an actor, and thus acquired a little information concerning dramatic literature. He had been on a newspaper, one of the rank and file as well as an editor. He knew a good deal about many things, arts, customs, and trades. But of one thing he was profoundly ignorant, and that was of painting.

He looked up Burls's card, however—'Bartholomew Burls & Co., Church-street, City. Inventors of the only safe and perfect Method of Cleaning Oil-paintings'—and, accompanied by Jack Dunquerque,

who knew about as much of pictures as himself, hunted up the shop, and entered it with the meekness of a pigeon about to be plucked.

They stood amid a mass of pictures, the like of which Gilead Beck had never before conceived. They were hanging on the walls; they were piled on the floor; they were stretched across the ceiling; they climbed the stairs; they were hiding away in dark corners; a gaping doorway lit with gas showed a cellar below where they were stacked in hundreds. Pictures of all kinds. The shop was rather dark, though the sun of May was pouring a flood of light even upon the narrow City streets. But you could make out something. There were portraits in hundreds. The effigies of dead men and women stared at you from every second frame. Your ancestor—Mr. Burls was very particular in ascertaining beyond a doubt that it was your own ancestor, and nobody else's—frowned at you in bright steel armour with a Vandyke beard; or he presented a shaven face with full cheeks and a Ramillies wig; or he smirked upon you from a voluminous white scarf and a coat-collar which rose to the top of his head. The ladies of your family—Mr. Burls was very particular, before selling you one, in ascertaining beyond a doubt that she belonged to your own branch of the house, and

none other—smiled upon you with half-closed lids, like the consort of Potiphar, the Egyptian; or they frisked as shepherdesses in airy robes, conscious of their charms; or they brandished full-blown petticoats, compared with which crinolines were graceful; or they blushed in robes which fell tightly about the figure, and left the waist beneath the arms. Name any knight, or mayor, or court beauty, or famous toast among your ancestry whose portrait is wanting to your gallery, and Burls, the great genealogical collector, will find you before many weeks that missing link in the family history. Besides the portraits, there were landscapes, nymphs bathing, Venuses asleep, Venuses with a looking-glass, Venuses of all sorts; scenes from *Don Quixote;* Actæons surprising Dianas; battle-pieces, sea-pieces, river-pieces; 'bits' of Hampstead Heath, and boats on the Thames.

Mr. Beck looked round him, stroked his chin, and addressed the guardian of this treasure-house:

'I am going to buy pictures,' he began comprehensively. 'You air the Boss?'

'This gentleman means,' Jack explained, 'that he wants to look at your pictures with a view to buying some if he approves of them.'

The man in the shop was used to people who would buy one picture after a whole morning's

haggling, but he was not accustomed to people who wanted to buy pictures generally. He looked astonished, and then, with a circular sweep of his right hand, indicated that here were pictures, and all Mr. Beck had to do was to go in and buy them.

'Look round you, gentlemen,' he said; 'pray look round you; and the more you buy, the better we shall like it.'

Then he became aware that the elder speaker was an American, and he suddenly changed his front.

'Our chicer pictures,' he explained, 'are up-stairs. I should like you to look at them first. Will you step up, gentlemen?'

On the stairs, more pictures. On the landing, more pictures. On the stairs mounting higher, more pictures. But they stopped on the first floor. Mr. Burls and his assistants never invited any visitor to the second and third floors, because these rooms were sacred to the manufacture of old pictures, the multiplication of new, and the sacred processes of cleaning, lining, and restoring. In the first-floor rooms were fewer pictures, but more light.

One large composition immediately caught Mr. Beck's eye. A noble picture; a grand picture; a picture whose greatness of conception was equalled by its boldness of treatment. It occupied the whole

of one side of the wall, and might have measured twenty feet in length by fourteen in height. The subject was scriptural—the slaying of Sisera by Jael, Heber the Kenite's wife. The defeated general lay stretched on the couch, occupying a good ten feet of the available space. Beside him stood the woman, a majestic figure, with a tent-peg and a mallet, about to commit that famous breach of hospitality. The handle of the mallet was rendered most conscientiously, and had evidently been copied from a model. Through the open hangings of the tent were visible portions of the army chasing the fugitives and lopping off their heads.

'That seems a striking picture,' said Mr. Beck. 'I take that picture, sir, to represent George Washington after the news of the surrender at Saratoga, or General Jackson after the battle of New Orleens.'

'Grant after Gettysburg,' suggested Jack.

'No, sir. I was at Gettysburg myself; and the hero asleep on the bed, making every allowance for his fancy dress, which I take to be allegorical, is not at all like General Ulysses Grant, nor is it like General Sherman. The young female, I s'pose, is Liberty, with a hammer in one hand and a dagger in the other. Too much limb for an American gell, and the flesh is redder than one could wish. But on

the hull a striking picture. What may be the value of this composition, mister ?'

'I beg your pardon, sir. Not Washington, sir, nor General Jackson, though we can procure you in a very short time fine portraits of both these 'eroes. This, gentlemen, is a biblical subject. Cicero, overtaken by sleep while in jail, about to be slain by 'Eber the wife of the Kenite. That is 'Eber, with the 'eavy 'ammer in 'er 'and. The Kenite belonged, as I have always understood—for I don't remember the incident myself—to the opposite faction. That splendid masterpiece, gentlemen, has been valued at five 'undred. For a town'all or for an altar-piece it would be priceless. To let it go at anything under five 'undred would be a sin and a shame, besides a-throwing away of money. Look at the light and shade. Look at 'Eber's arm and Cicero's leg. That leg alone has been judged by connisseers worth all the money.'

Mr. Beck was greatly disappointed in the subject and in the price; even had it been the allegorical picture which he thought, he was not yet sufficiently educated in the prices of pictures to offer five hundred for it; and when Mr. Burls's assistant spoke of pounds, Mr. Beck thought of dollars. So he replied:

'Five hundred dollars? I will give you five-and-twenty.'

'That,' interposed Jack Dunquerque, 'is a five-pound note.'

'Then, by gad, sir,' said the man, with alacrity, 'it's yours! It's been hangin' there for ten years, and never an offer yet. It's yours!'

This splendid painting, thus purchased at the rate of rather more than threepence a square foot, was the first acquisition made by Mr. Beck towards his great Gallery of Ancient and Modern Masters.

He paid for it on the spot, calling Jack to witness the transaction.

'We will send it up to the hotel to-morrow,' said the man.

'I shall have it fixed right away along the side of my room,' said Mr. Beck. 'Should it be framed?'

'I should certainly have it framed,' said Jack.

'Yes, sir; we shall be happy to frame it for you.'

'I daresay you would,' Jack went on. 'This is a job for a house-carpenter, Mr. Beck. You will have to build the frame for this gigantic picture. Have it sent over, and consider the frame afterwards.'

This course was approved; but, for reasons which will subsequently appear, the picture never was framed.

The dealer proceeded to show other pictures.

'A beautiful Nicolas Pushing—"Nymphs and Satyrs in a Bacchanalian Dance"—a genuine thing.'

'I don't think much of that, Mr. Dunquerque; do you? The Nymphs haven't finished dressing; and the gentlemen with the goats' legs may be satires on human natur', but they are not pretty. Let us go on to the next show in the caravan, mister.'

'This is Hetty. In the master's best style. "Graces surprised while Bathing in the River." Much admired by connisseers.'

'No, sir; not at all,' said Mr. Beck severely. '*My* gallery is going to elevate the morals of our gells and boys. It's a pretty thing too, Mr. Dunquerque, and I sometimes think it's a pity morality was ever invented. Now, Boss.'

'Quite so, sir. Hetty is, as you say, raythe r— What do you think of this, now—a lovely Grooze?'

'Grooze,' said Mr. Beck, 'is French, I suppose, for gell. Yes, now that's a real pretty picture; I call that a picture you ain't ashamed to admire; there's lips you can kiss; there's a chin you can chuck—'

'How about the morals?' asked Jack.

'Wal, Mr. Dunquerque, we'll buy the picture

first, and we'll see how it rhymes with morals afterwards. There's eyes to look into a man's. Any more heads of pretty Groozes, mister? I'll buy the lot.'

'This is a Courage-oh!' the exhibitor went on, after expressing his sorrow that he had no more Groozes, and bringing out a Madonna. 'Thought to be genuine by the best judges. History of the picture unknown redooces the value.'

'I can't go fooling around with copies in *my* gallery,' said Mr. Beck. 'I must have genuine pictures, or none.'

'Then we will not offer you that Madonna, sir. I think I have something here to suit you. Come this way. A Teniers, gentlemen—a real undoubted gem of a Teniers. This is a picture now for any gentleman's collection. It came from the gallery of a nobleman lately deceased, and was bought at the sale by Mr. Burls himself, who knows a picture when he sees one. Mr. Bartholomew Burls, our senior partner, gentlemen. "The Bagpipe-player."'

It was an excellent imitation, but of a well-known picture, and it required consummate impudence to pretend that it was original.

'O,' said Jack, 'but I have seen this somewhere else. In the Louvre, I believe.'

'Very likely, sir,' replied the unabashed vendor.

'Teniers painted six hundred pictures. There was a good many "Bagpipe-players" among them. One is in the Louvre. This is another.'

On the advice of Jack Dunquerque Mr. Beck refrained from buying, and contented himself with selecting, with the option of purchase. When they left the shop, some twenty pictures were thus selected.

The seller, who had a small interest or commission on sales, as soon as their steps were fairly out of the shop, executed a short dance indicative of joy. Then he called up the stairs, and a man came slowly down.

A red-nosed bibulous person; by name Critchett. He was manufacturer of old masters in ordinary to Bartholomew Burls & Co.; cleaned and restored pictures when other orders were slack, and was excellent at 'multiplication.' He had worked for Burls for a quarter of a century, save for a few weeks, when one Frank Mellishp, a young gentleman then down on his luck, worked in his stead. A trustworthy and faithful creature, though given to drink; he could lie like an echo; was as incapable of blushing as the rock on which the echo plays; and bore cross-examination like a Claimant.

'Come down, Critchett — come down. We've sold "Cicero and 'Eber."'

'"Sisera and Jael."'

'Well, it don't matter—and I said "Cicero in Jail." They're gone for five pounds. The governor he always said I could take whatever was offered, and keep it for myself. Five pounds in my pocket! Your last Teniers—that old bagpipe-party—I tried him, but it was no go. But I've sold the only one left of your Groozes, and you'd better make a few more, out of hand. Look here, Critchett: it isn't right to drink in hours, and the guv'nor out and all; but this is an occasion. This ain't a common day, because I've sold the Cicero. I won't ask you to torse, nor yet to pay; but I says, "Critchett, come across the way, my boy, and put your lips to what you like best." Lord, Lord! on'y give me an American, and give him to me green! Never mind your hat, Critchett. "It's limp in the brim and it's gone in the rim," as the poet says; and you look more respectable without it, Critchett.'

'That's a good beginning,' Beck observed, after luncheon. They were in Jack Dunquerque's club, in the smoking-room. 'That's a first-rate beginning. How many pictures go to a gallery?'

'It depends on the size of it. About five hundred for a moderate-sized one.'

Mr. Beck whistled.

'Never mind. The Ile pays for all. A Patron of Art. Yes, sir, that seems the right end of the stick for a rich man to keep up. But I've been thinking it over. It isn't enough to go to shops and buy pictures. We must go in for sculpting too, and a Patron ought to get hold of a struggling artist, and lend him a helping hand; he should advance unknown talent. That's my idea.'

'I think I can help you there,' said Jack, his eyes twinkling. 'I know just such a man; an artist unknown, without friends, with slender means, of great genius, who has long languished in obscurity.'

'Bring him to me, Mr. Dunquerque. Bring that young man to me. Let me be the means of pushing the young gentleman. Holy thunder, what is money if it isn't used? Tell me his name.'

'I think I ought to have spoken to him first,' said Jack, in some confusion, and a little taken aback by Mr. Beck's determination. 'But, however, you can only try. His name is Humphrey Jagenal. I will, if you please, go and see him to-day. And I will ask him to call upon you to-morrow morning.'

'I would rather call upon *him*,' said Mr. Beck. 'It might look like the pride of patronage asking him to call at the Langham. I don't want him to start with a feelin' of shame.'

'Not at all; at least, of course it will be patronage, and I believe he will prefer it. There is no shame in taking a commission to execute a picture.'

'Mr. Dunquerque, every day you confer fresh obligations upon me. And I can do nothing for you —nothing at all.'

At this time it was Gilead Beck's worst misfortune that he was not taken seriously by any one except Gabriel Cassilis, who literally and liberally interpreted his permission to receive all his money for safe investment. But as for his schemes, vague and shadowy as they were, for using his vast income for some practically philanthropic and benevolent objects, none of his friends sympathised with him, because none of them understood him. Yet the man was deeply in earnest. He meant what he said, and more, when he told Gabriel Cassilis that a voice urged him by day and by night not to save his money, but to use for others what he could not use himself. He had been two months in England on purpose to learn a way, but saw no way yet. And every way seemed barred. He would not give money to societies, because they were societies; he wanted to strike out something new for himself. Nor would he elaborate a scheme to be carried out after his death. Let every man, he repeated

every day, do what he has to do in his lifetime. How was he to spend his great revenues? A Patron of Art? It was the first tangible method that he had struck upon. He would be that to begin with. Art has the great advantage, too, of swallowing up any conceivable quantity of money.

And on the way from the Burls's Dépôt of Real and Genuine Art, he hit upon the idea of advancing artists as well as Art. He was in thorough earnest when he raised his grave and now solemn eyes to Jack Dunquerque, and thanked him for his kindness. And Jack's conscience smote him.

'I must tell you,' Jack explained, 'that I have never seen any of Mr. Humphrey Jagenal's pictures. Miss Fleming, the young lady whom you met at Mrs. Cassilis's, told me once that he was a great artist.'

'Bring him to me, bring him to me, and we will talk. I hope that I may be able to speak clearly to him without hurting his feelin's. If I brag about my Pile, Mr. Dunquerque, you just whisper "Shoddy," and I'll sing small.'

'There will be no hurting of feelings. When you come to a question of buying and selling, an artist is about the same as everybody else. Give him a big commission; let him have time to work it out; and

send him a cheque in advance. I believe that would be the method employed by patrons whom artists love. At least, I should love such a patron.

'Beck,' he went on, after a pause: both were seated in the long deep easy-chairs of the club smoking-room, with the chairs pretty close together, so that they could talk in low tones,—'Beck, if you talk about artists, there's Phil—I mean Miss Fleming. By Jove! she only wants a little training to knock the heads off half the R.A.s. Come out with me and call upon her. She will show us her sketches.'

'I remember her,' said Gilead Beck slowly; 'a tall young lady; a lovely Grooze, as the man who grinds that picture-mill would say; she had large brown eyes that looked as if they could be nothing but tender and true, and a rosebud mouth all sweetness and smiles, and lips that trembled when she thought. I remember her—a head like a queen's, piled up with her own brown hair and flowers, an' a figure like—like a Mexican half-caste at fourteen.'

'You talk of her as if you were in love with her,' said Jack jealously.

'No, Mr. Dunquerque; no, sir. That is, I may be. But it won't come between you and her, what I feel. You air a most fortunate man. Go down on

your knees when you get home, and say so. For or'nary blessin's you may use the plan of Joshua Mixer, the man who had the biggest claim in Empire City before it busted up. He got his Petitions and his Thanksgivin's printed out neat on a card together, and then he hung that card over his bed. "My sentiments," he used to say, jerkin' his thumb to the card when he got in at night. Never omitted his prayers; never forgot that jerk, drunk or sober. Joshua Mixer was the most religious man in all that camp. But for special Providences; for Ile; for a lucky shot; for a sweet, pure, heavenly, gracious creature like Miss Fleming,—I say, go on your knees and own to it, as a man should. Well, Mr. Dunquerque,' he continued, 'I wish you success; and if there's anything I can do to promote your success, let me know. Now there's another thing. What I want to do is to unlock the door which keeps me from the society of men of genius. I can get into good houses; they all seem open to me because I've got money. London is the most hospitable city in this wide world for those that have the stamps. Republican? Republican ain't the word for it. Do they ask who a man is? Not they. They ask about his dollars, and they welcome him with smiles. It's a beautiful thing to look at, and it makes an

Amer'can sigh when he thinks of his own country, where they inquire into a stranger's antecedents. But there's exceptions, and artists and authors I cannot get to. And I want to meet your great men. Not to interview them, sir. Not at all. They may talk a donkey's hind leg off, and I wouldn't send a single line to the New York papers to tell them what was said nor what they wore. But I should like, just for one evening, to meet and talk with the great writers whom we respect across the water.'

Again Jack Dunquerque's eyes began to twinkle. He *could* not enter into the earnestness of this man. And an idea occurred to him at which his face lit up with smiles.

'It requires thinking over. Suppose I was to be able to get together half a dozen or so of our greatest writers, how should we manage to entertain them?'

'I should like, if they would only come—I should like to give them a dinner at the Langham. A square meal; the very best dinner that the hotel can serve. I should like to make them feel like being at the Guildhall.'

'I will think about it,' said Jack, 'and let you know in a day or two what I can do for you.'

CHAPTER IX.

'Ambition should be made of sterner stuff.'

'A Patron at last, Cornelius,' said Humphrey Jagenal, partly recovering from the shock of Jack Dunquerque's communication. 'A Patron. Patronage is, after all, the breath of life to Art. Let others pander to the vitiated public taste and cater for a gaping crowd round the walls of the Royal Academy. I would paint for a Lorenzo only, and so work for the highest interests of Art. We will call, brother, upon this Mr. Beck to-morrow.'

'We will!' said Cornelius, with enthusiasm.

It was in the Studio. Both brothers, simultaneously fired with ardour, started to their feet and threw back their heads with a gesture of confidence and determination. The light of high resolve flashed from their eyes, which were exactly alike. The half-opened lips expressed their delight in the contemplation of immortal fame. Their chance had arrived; their youth was come back to them.

True, that Gilead Beck at present only proposed to become a Patron to the Artist; but while it did

not enter into Humphrey's head for one moment that he could make that visit unsupported by his brother, so the thought lay in either's brain that a Poet wanted patronage as much as an Artist.

They were both excited. To Humphrey it was clear that the contemplation of his great work, in which he had basked so many years, was to be changed for days of active labour. No longer could he resolve to carry it into execution the 'day after to-morrow,' as the Arabs say. This was difficult to realise, but as yet the thought was like the first shock of ice-cold water, for it set his veins tingling and braced his nerves. He felt within him once more the strength felt by every young man at first, which is the strength of Michael Angelo. He saw in imagination his great work, the first of many great works, finished, a glorious canvas glowing with the realisation of a painter's dream of colour, crowded with graceful figures, warm with the thought of genius, and rich with the fancy of an Artist-scholar —a work for all time. And he gasped. But for his beard he might have been a boy waiting for the morrow, when he should receive the highest prize in the school; or an undergraduate, the favourite of his year, after the examination, looking confidently to the Senior Wranglership.

In the morning they took no walk, but retired silently each to his own room. In the Studio the Artist opened his portfolios, and spread out the drawings made years ago when he was studying in Rome. They were good drawings; there was feeling in every line; but they were copies. There was not one scrap of original work, and his Conscience began to whisper—only he refused at first to listen—that the skill of hand and touch was gone. Then Conscience, which gets angry if disregarded, took to whispering more loudly, and presently he heard. He took crayon and paper, and began, feverishly and in haste, to copy one of his own old drawings. He worked for a quarter of an hour, and then, looking at the thing he had once done beside the thing he was then doing, he dashed the pencil from him, and tore up the miserable replica in disgust. His spirit, which had flown so high, sank dull and heavy as lead; he threw himself back in his chair and began to think, gazing hopelessly into space.

It was the opportunity of Conscience, who presently began to sing as loudly as any skylark, but not so cheerfully. 'You are fifty,' said that voice which seldom lies; 'you have wasted the last twenty years of life; you have become a wind-bag and a shallow humbug; you cannot now paint or draw at

all; what little power was in you has departed. Your brother, the Poet, has been steadily working while you have slept'—it will be perceived that Conscience spoke from imperfect information. 'He will produce a great book, and live. You will die. The grave will close over you, and you will be forgotten.'

It was a hard saying, and the Artist groaned as he listened to it.

In the Workshop, Cornelius also, startled into action, spread out upon the table a bundle of papers which had been lying undisturbed in his desk for a dozen years or more. They were poems he had written in his youth, unpublished verses, thoughts in rhyme such as an imaginative young man easily pours forth, reproducing the fashion of the time and the thoughts of others. He began to read these over again with mingled pleasure and pain. For the thoughts seemed strange to him. He felt that they were good and lofty thoughts, but the conviction forced itself upon him that the brain which had produced them was changed. No more of such good matter was left within it. The lines of thought were changed. The poetic faculty, a delicate plant, which droops unless it is watered and carefully tended, was dead within him.

And the whole of the Epic to be written.

Not a line done, not a single episode on paper, though to Phillis he claimed to have done so much.

He seized a pen, and with trembling fingers and agitated brain forced himself to write.

In half an hour he tore the paper into shreds, and, with a groan, threw down the pen. The result was too feeble.

Then he too began to meditate, like his brother in the Studio. Presently his guardian angel, who very seldom got such a chance, began to admonish him, even as the dean admonishes an erring undergraduate.

'You are fifty,' said the invisible Censor. 'What have you done with yourself for twenty years and more? Your best thoughts have passed away; the poetical eye is dim; you will write no more. Your brother, the Artist, is busy with pencil and brain. He will produce a great work, and live for ever. You will do nothing; you will go down into the pit and be forgotten.'

It was too much for the Poet. His lips trembled, his hand shook. He could no more rest in his chair.

He walked backwards and forwards, the voice pursuing him.

'Wasted years; wasted energies; wasted gifts; your chance is gone. You cannot write now.'

Poets are more susceptible than artists. That is the reason why Cornelius rushed out of the Workshop to escape this torture, and sought his brother Humphrey.

Humphrey started like a guilty person. His face was pale, his eye was restless.

'Cornelius?'

'Do not let me disturb you, my dear brother. You are happy; you are at work; your soul is at peace.'

'And you, Cornelius?'

'I am not at peace. I am restless this morning. I am nervous and agitated.'

'So am I, Cornelius. I cannot work. My pencil refuses to obey my brain.'

'My own case. My pen will not write what I wish. The link between the brain and the nerves is for the moment severed.'

'Let us go out, brother. It is now three. We will walk slowly in the direction of the Langham Hotel.'

As they put on their hats Cornelius stopped, and said reflectively,

'The nervous system is a little shaken with

both of us. Can you suggest anything, brother Humphrey ?'

'The best thing for a shaken nervous system,' replied Humphrey promptly, 'is a glass of champagne. I will get some champagne for you, brother Cornelius.'

He returned presently with a modest pint bottle, which they drank together, Humphrey remarking (in italics) that in such a case it is not a question of what a man *wants*, so much as of what he *needs*.

A pint of champagne is not much between two men, but it produced an excellent effect upon the Twins. Before it they were downcast; they looked around with the furtive eyes of conscious imposture; their hands trembled. After it they raised their heads, laughed, and looked boldly in each other's eyes, assumed a gay and confident air, and presently marched off arm-in-arm to call upon the Patron.

Gilead Beck, unprepared to see both brethren, welcomed them with a respect almost overwhelming. It was his first interview with Genius.

They introduced each other.

'Mr. Beck,' said Cornelius, 'allow me to introduce my brother, Humphrey Jagenal. In his case the world is satisfied with the Christian name alone,

without the ceremonial prefix. He is, as you know, the Artist.'

If his brother had been Titian or Correggio he could not have said more.

'Sir,' said Mr. Beck, shaking Humphrey's hand warmly, 'I am proud indeed to make your acquaintance. I am but a rough man myself, sir, but I respect genius.'

'Then,' said Humphrey, with admirable presence of mind, 'allow me to introduce my brother. Cornelius Jagenal, as you doubtless know, Mr. Beck, is the Poet.'

Mr. Beck did not know it, and said so. But he shook hands with Cornelius none the less cordially.

'Sir, I have been knocking about the world, and have not read any poetry since I was a boy. Then I read Alexander Pope. You know Pope, Mr. Jagenal?'

Cornelius smiled, as if he might allow some merit to Pope, though small in comparison with his own.

'I have never met with your poems, Mr. Cornelius Jagenal, or your pictures, Mr. Humphrey, but I hope you will now enable me to do so.'

'My brother is engaged—' said Cornelius.

'My brother is engaged—' began Humphrey. 'Pardon, brother.'

'Sit down, gentlemen. Will you take anything? In California, up country, we always begin with a drink. Call for what you please, gentlemen. Sail in, as we say.'

They took champagne, for the second time that day, and then their eyes began to glisten.

Mr. Beck observed that they were both alike—small and fragile-looking men, with bright eyes and delicate features; he made a mental note to the effect that they would never advance their own fortunes. He also concluded from their red noses, and from the way in which they straightened their backs after placing themselves outside the champagne, that they loved the goblet, and habitually handled it too often.

'Now, gentlemen,' he began, after making these observations, 'may I be allowed to talk business?'

They both bowed.

'Genius, gentlemen, is apt to be careless of the main chance. It don't care for the almighty dollar; it lets fellows like me heap up the stamps. What can we do but ask Genius to dig into our pile?'

Humphrey poured out another glass of champagne

for his brother, and one for himself. Then he turned to Cornelius and nodded gravely.

'Cornelius, Mr. Beck, so far as I understand him, speaks the strongest common sense.'

'We agree with you so far, Mr. Beck,' said Cornelius critically, because he was there to give moral support to his brother.

'Why should I have any delicacy in saying to a young man, or a man of any age,' he added doubtfully, for the years of the Twins seemed uncertain, "You, sir, are an Artist and a Genius. Take a cheque, and carry out your ideas"?'

'What reason indeed?' asked Cornelius. 'The offer does honour to both.'

'Or to another man, "You, sir, are a Poet. Why should the cares of the world interfere with your thoughts? Take a cheque, and make the world rejoice"?'

Humphrey clapped his hands.

'The world lies in travail for such a patron of poetry,' he said.

'Why, then, we are agreed,' said Mr. Beck. 'Gentlemen, I say to you both, collectively, let me usher into the world those works of genius which you are bound to produce. You, sir, are painting a picture. When can you finish me that picture?'

'In six months,' said Humphrey, his brain suffused with a rosy warmth of colour, which made him see things in an impossibly favourable light.

'I buy that picture, sir, at your own price,' said the patron. 'I shall exhibit it in London, and it shall then go to New York with me. And you, Mr. Cornelius Jagenal, are engaged upon poems. When would you wish to publish your verses?'

'My Epic, the *Upheaving of Ælfred*, will be ready for publication about the end of November,' said Cornelius.

Humphrey felt a passing pang of jealousy as he perceived that his brother would be before the world a month in advance of himself. But what is a month compared with immortality?

'I charge myself, sir, if you will allow me,' said the American, 'with the production of that work. It shall be printed in the best style possible, on the thickest paper made, and illustrated by the best artist that can be found—you, perhaps, Mr. Humphrey Jagenal. It shall be bound in Russian leather; its exterior shall be worthy of its contents. And as for business arrangements, gentlemen, you will perhaps consider them at your leisure, and let me know what you think. We shall be sure to agree, because, if you will not think it shoddy in me to say so, I

have my Pile to dig into. And I shall send you, if you will allow me, gentlemen, a small cheque each in advance.'

They murmured assent and rose to go.

'If you would favour me further, gentlemen, by dining with me—say this day week—I should take it as a great distinction. I hope, with the assistance of Mr. Dunquerque, to have a few prominent men of letters to meet you. I want to have my table full of genius.'

'Can we, brother Humphrey, accept Mr. Beck's invitation?'

Cornelius asked as if they were weeks deep in engagements. As it was, nobody ever asked them anywhere, and they had no engagements at all.

Humphrey consulted a pocket-book with grave face.

'We can, Mr. Beck.'

'And if you know any one else, gentlemen, any men of Literature and Art who will come too, bring them along with you, and I shall feel it an honour.'

They knew no one connected with Literature and Art, not even a printer's devil, but they did not say so.

At twelve o'clock, towards the close of this fa-

tiguing day, Cornelius asked Humphrey with a little hesitation if he really thought he should have finished his great work in six months.

'Art cannot be forced, Cornelius,' said the Painter airily. 'If I am not ready, I shall not hesitate to consider the pledge conditional. My work must be perfect ere it leave my hands.'

'And mine too,' said the Poet. 'I will never consent to let a poem of mine go forth unfinished to the world. The work must be polished *ad unguem*.'

'This is a memorable day, brother. The tumblers are empty. Allow me. And, Cornelius, I really do think that considering the way in which we have been treated by Phillis Fleming, and her remarks about afternoon work, we ought to call and let her understand the reality of our reputation.'

'We will, Humphrey. But it is not enough to recover lost ground; we must advance farther. The fortress shall be made to surrender.'

'Let us drink to your success, brother, and couple with the toast the name of Phillis—Phillis—Phillis Jagenal, brother?'

They drank that toast, smiling unutterable things.

CHAPTER X.

'Call me not fool till Heaven hath sent me fortune.'

When Jack Dunquerque communicated to Lawrence Colquhoun the fact of having made the acquaintance of Miss Fleming, and subsequently that of Mrs. L'Estrange, Lawrence expressed no surprise and felt no suspicions. Probably, had he felt any, they would have been at once set aside, because Colquhoun was not a man given to calculate the future chances, and to disquiet himself about possible events. Also at this time he was taking little interest in Phillis. A pretty piquante girl; he devoted a whole day to her; drove her to Twickenham, and placed her in perfect safety under the charge of his cousin. What more was wanted? Agatha wrote to him twice a week or so, and when he had time he read the letters. They were all about Phillis, and most of them contained the assurance that he had no entanglements to fear.

'Entanglements!' he murmured impatiently. 'As if a man cannot dine with a girl without falling

in love with her. Women are always thinking that men want to be married.'

He was forgetting, after the fashion of men who have gone through the battle, how hot is the fight for those who are just beginning it. Jack Dunquerque was four-and-twenty; he was therefore, so to speak, in the thick of it. Phillis's eyes were like two quivers filled with darts, and when she turned them innocently upon her friend the enemy, the darts flew straight at him, and transfixed him as if he were another Sebastian. Colquhoun's time was past; he was clothed in the armour of indifference which comes with the years, and he was forgetting the past.

Still, had he known of the visit to the Tower of London, the rowing on the river, the luncheons in Carnarvon-square, it is possible that even he might have seen the propriety of requesting Jack Dunquerque to keep out of danger for the future.

He had no plans for Phillis, except of the simplest kind. She was to remain in charge of Agatha for a year, and then she would come out. He hoped that she would marry well, because her father, had he lived, would have wished it. And that was all he hoped about her.

He had his private worries at this time—those

already indicated—connected with Victoria Cassilis. The ice once broken, that lady allowed him no rest. She wrote to him on some pretence nearly every day; she sent her maid, the unlovely one, with three-cornered notes all about nothing; she made him meet her in society; she made him dine with her; it seemed as if she was spreading a sort of net about him, through the meshes of which he could not escape.

With the knowledge of what had been, it was an unrighteous thing for Colquhoun to go to the house of Gabriel Cassilis; he ought not to be there, he felt; it was the one house in all London in which he had no business. And yet—how to avoid it?

And Gabriel Cassilis seemed to like him; evidently liked to talk to him; singled him out, this great financier, and talked with him as if Colquhoun too was interested in stock; called upon him at his chambers, and told him, in a dry but convincing way, something of his successes and his projects.

It was after many talks of this kind that Lawrence Colquhoun, forgetful of the past, and not remembering that of all men in the world Gabriel Cassilis was the last who should have charge of his money, put it all in his hands, with power-of-attorney

to sell out and reinvest for him. But that was nothing. Colquhoun was not the man to trouble about money. He was safe in the hands of this great and successful capitalist; he gave no thought to any risk; he congratulated himself on his cleverness in persuading the financier to take the money for him; and he continued to see Victoria Cassilis nearly every day.

They quarrelled when they did meet; there was not a conversation between them in which she did not say something bitter, and he something savage. And yet he did not have the courage to refuse the invitations which were almost commands. Nor could she resign the sweet joy of making him feel her power.

A secret, you see, has a fatal fascination about it. Schoolgirls, I am told, are given to invent little secrets which mean nothing, and to whisper them in the ears of their dearest friends to the exclusion of the rest. The possession of this unknown and invaluable fact brings them together, whispering and conspiring, at every possible moment. Freemasons again—how are they kept together, except by the possession of secrets which are said to have been published over and over again? And when two people have a secret which means—all that the secret between Colquhoun

and Mrs. Cassilis meant, they can no more help being drawn together than the waters can cease to find their own level. To be together, to feel that the only other person in the world who knows that secret is with you, is a kind of safety. Yet what did it matter to Colquhoun? Simply nothing. The secret was his as well as hers; but the reasons for keeping it a secret were not his at all, but hers entirely.

So Phillis was neglected by her guardian, and left to Agatha and Jack Dunquerque with such results as we shall see.

So Lawrence Colquhoun fell into the power of this man of stocks, about the mouth of whose City den the footsteps pointed all one way. He congratulated himself; he found out Gilead Beck, and they congratulated each other.

'I don't see,' said Colquhoun, who had already enough for four bachelors, 'why one's income should not be doubled.'

'With Mr. Cassilis,' said Gilead Beck, 'you sign cheques, and he gives you dividends. It's like Ile, because you can go on pumping.'

'He understands more than any other living man,' said Lawrence.

'He is in the inner track, sir,' said Mr. Beck.

'And a man,' said Lawrence, 'ready to take in his friends with himself.'

'A high-toned and a whole-souled man,' said Gilead Beck, with enthusiasm. 'That man, sir, I do believe, would take in the hull world.'

CHAPTER XI.

'I had rather hear a brazen candlestick turn'd,
Or a dry wheel grate on an axle-tree;
And that would set my teeth nothing on edge,
Nothing so much as mincing poetry.'

Jack Dunquerque repaired to the Langham, the day after the call of the Twins, with a face in which cheerful anticipation and anxiety were curiously blended. He was serious with his lips, but he laughed with his eyes. And he spoke with a little hesitation not often observed in him.

'I think your dinner will come off next Wednesday,' he said. 'And I have been getting together your party for you.'

'That is so, Mr. Dunquerque?' asked Gilead Beck with a solemnity which hardly disguised his pride and joy. 'That is so? And those great men, your friends, are actually coming?'

'I have seen them all, personally. And I put the case before each of them. I said, "Here is an American gentleman most anxious to make your acquaintance; he has no letters of introduction to

you, but he is a sincere admirer of your genius; he appreciates you perhaps better than any other living man."'

'Heap it up, Mr. Dunquerque,' said the Man of Oil. 'Heap it up. Tell them I am Death on appreciation.'

'That is in substance what I did tell them. Then I explained that you deputed me, or gave me permission, to ask them to dinner. "The honour," I said, "is mutual. On the one hand, my friend, Mr. Gilead P. Beck"—I ventured to say, "my friend, Mr. Gilead P. Beck—"'

'If you hadn't said that you should have been scalped and gouged. Go on, Mr. Dunquerque; go on, sir.'

'"On the one hand, my friend, Mr. Gilead P. Beck—"'

'That is so—that is so.'

'"Will feel himself honoured by your company; on the other hand, it will be a genuine source of pleasure for you to know that you are as well known and as thoroughly appreciated on the other side of the water as you are here." I am not much of a speechmaker, and I assure you that little effort cost me a good deal of thought. However, the end of it is all you care about. Most of the writing swells

will come, either on Wednesday next or on any other day you please.'

'Mr. Dunquerque, not a day passes but you load me with obligations. Tell me, if you please, who they are.'

'Well, you will say I have done pretty well, I think.' Jack pulled out a paper. 'And you will know most of the names. First of all, you would like to see the old Philosopher of Cheyne Walk, Thomas Carlyle, as your guest?'

'Carlyle, sir, is a name to conjure with in the States. When I was Editor of the *Clearville Roarer* I had an odd volume of Carlyle, and I used to quote him as long as the book lasted. It perished in a fight. And to think that I shall meet the man who wrote that work! An account of the dinner must be written for the *Rockoleaville Gazette*. We'll have a special reporter, Mr. Dunquerque. We'll get a man who'll do it up to the handle.'

Jack looked at his list again.

'What do you say of Professor Huxley and Mr. Darwin?'

Mr. Beck shook his head. These two writers began to flourish—that is, to be read—in the States after his editorial days, and he knew them not.

'I should say they were prominent citizens, likely, if I knew what they'd written. Is Professor Huxley a Professing Christian? There was a Professor Habakkuk Huckster once down Empire City way in the Moody and Sankey business, with an interest in the organs and a percentage on the hymn-books; but they're not relations, I suppose? Not probable. And the other genius—what is his name—Darwin? Grinds novels perhaps?'

'Historical works of fiction. Great in genealogy is Darwin.'

'Never mind my ignorance, Mr. Dunquerque. And go on, sir. I'm powerful interested.'

'Ruskin is coming; and I had thought of Robert Browning, the poet, but I am afraid he may not be able to be present. You see, Browning is so much sought after by the younger men of the day. They used to play polo and billiards and other frivolous things till he came into fashion with his light and graceful verse, so simple that all may understand it. His last poem, I believe, is now sung about the streets. However, there are Tennyson and Swinburne—they are both coming. Buchanan I would ask, if I knew him, but I don't. George Eliot of course I could not invite to a stag party. Trollope we might get, perhaps—'

'Give me Charles Reade, sir,' said Gilead Beck. 'He is the novelist they like on our side.'

'I am afraid I could not persuade him to come; though he might be pleased to see you if you would call at his house, perhaps. However, Beck, the great thing is'—he folded up his list and placed it in his pocket-book—'that you shall have a dinner of authors as good as any that sat down to the Lord Mayor's spread last year. Authors of all sorts, and the very best. None of your unknown little hungry anonymous beggars who write novels in instalments for weekly papers. Big men, sir, with big names. Men you'll be proud to know. And they shall be asked for next Wednesday.'

'That gives only four days. It's terrible sudden,' said Gilead Beck. He shook his head with as much gravity as if he was going to be hanged in four days. Then he sat down and began to write the names of his guests.

'Professor Huxley,' he said, looking up. 'I suppose I can buy that clergyman's sermons? And the Universal Genius who reels out the historical romances, Mr. Darwin? I shall get his works, too. And there's Mr. Ruskin, Mr. Robert Browning—'

'What are you going to do?'

'Well, Mr. Dunquerque, I am going to devote

the next four days, from morning till night, to solid preparation for that evening. I shall go out, right away, and I shall buy every darned book those great men have written; and if I sit up every night over the job, I'm bound to read every word.'

'O!' said Jack. 'Then I advise you to begin with Robert Browning.'

'The light and graceful verse that everybody can understand? I will,' said Gilead Beck. 'They shall not find me unacquainted with their poems. Mr. Dunquerque, for Lord's sake, don't tell them it was all crammed up in four days.'

'Not I. But—I say—you know, authors don't like to talk about their own books.'

'That's the modesty of real genius,' said the American, with admiration.

It will be perceived that Jack spoke with a certain rashness. Most authors I have myself known do love very much to talk about their own books.

'That is their modesty. But they will talk about each other's books. And it is as well to be prepared. What I'm bound to make them feel, somehow, is that they have a man before them who has gone in for the hull lot and survived. A tough contract, Mr. Dunquerque, but you trust me.'

'Very well,' said Jack, putting on his hat, 'only don't ask them questions. Authors don't like being questioned. Why, I shouldn't wonder if, next Wednesday, some of them pretended not to know the names of their own books. Don't you know that Shakespeare, when he went down to Stratford, to live like a retired grocer at Leytonstone, used to pretend not to know what a play meant? And when a strolling company came round, and the manager asked permission to play *Hamlet*, he was the first to sign a petition to the mayor not to allow immoral exhibitions in the borough.'

'Is that so, sir?'

'It may be so,' said Jack, 'because I never heard it contradicted.'

As soon as he was gone, Gilead Beck sought the nearest bookseller's shop and gave an extensive order. He requested to be furnished with all the works of Carlyle, Ruskin, Tennyson, Swinburne, Browning, Buchanan, Huxley, Darwin, and a few more. Then he returned to the Langham, gave orders that he was at home to no one except Mr. Dunquerque, took off his coat, lit a cigar, ordered more champagne, and began the first of the three most awful days he ever spent in all his life.

The books presently came in a great box, and he

spread them on the table with a heart that sank at the mere contemplation of their numbers. About three hundred volumes in all. And only four days to get through them. Seventy-five volumes a day, say, at the rate of fifteen hours' daily work; five an hour, one every twelve minutes. He laid his watch upon the table, took the first volume of Robert Browning that was uppermost, sat down in his long chair with his feet up, and began.

The book was *Fifine at the Fair*. Gilead Beck read cheerfully and with great ease the first eight or ten pages. Then he discovered with a little annoyance that he understood nothing whatever of the author's meaning. 'That comes of too rapid reading,' he said. So he turned back to the beginning and began again with more deliberation. Ten minutes clean wasted, and not even half a volume got through. When he had got to the tenth page for the second time, he questioned himself once more, and found that he understood less than ever. Were things right? Could it be Browning, or some impostor? Yes; the name of Robert Browning was on the title-page; also it was English. And the words held together, and were not sprinkled out of a pepper-pot. He began a third time. Same result. He threw away his cigar and wiped his brow,

on which the cold dews of trouble were gathering thickly.

'This is the beginning of the end, Gilead P. Beck,' he murmured. 'The Lord, to try you, sent His blessed Ile, and you've received it with a proud stomach. Now you air going off your head. Plain English, and you can't take in a single sentence.'

It was in grievous distress of mind that he sprang to his feet and began to walk about the room.

'There was no softenin' yesterday,' he murmured, trying to reassure himself. 'Why should there be to-day? Softenin' comes by degrees. Let us try again. Great Jehoshaphat!'

He stood up to his work, leaning against a window-post, and took two pages first, which he read very slowly. And then he dropped the volume in dismay, because he understood less than nothing.

It was the most disheartening thing he had ever attempted.

'I'd rather fight John Halkett over again,' he said. 'I'd rather sit with my finger on a trigger for a week, expecting Mr. Huggins to call upon me.'

Then he began to construe it line by line, thinking every now and then that he saw daylight.

It is considered rather a mark of distinction, a separating seal upon the brow, by that poet's admirers to reverence his later works. Their creed is that because a poem is rough, harsh, ungrammatical, and dark, it must have a meaning as deep as its black obscurity.

'It's like the texts of a copybook,' said Gilead. 'Pretty things, all of them, separate. Put them together, and where are they? I guess this book would read better upsy down.'

He poured cold water on his head for a quarter of an hour or so, and then tried reading it aloud.

This was worse than any previous method, because he comprehended no more of the poet's meaning, and the rough hard words made his front teeth crack and fly about the room in splinters.

'Cæsar's ghost!' he exclaimed, thinking what he should do if Robert Browning talked as he wrote. 'The human jaw isn't built that could stand it.'

Two hours were gone. There ought to have been ten volumes got through, and not ten pages finished of a single one.

He hurled *Fifine* to the other end of the room, and took up another work by the same poet. It was *Red Cotton Nightcap Country*, and the title

looked promising. No doubt a light and pretty fairy story. Also the beginning reeled itself off with a fatal facility which allured the reader onwards.

When the clock struck six he was sitting among the volumes on the table, with *Red Cotton Nightcap Country* still in his hand. His eyes were bloodshot, his hair was pushed in disorder about his head, his cheeks were flushed, his hands were trembling, the nerves in his face were twitching.

He looked about him wildly, and tried to collect his faculties. Then he arose and solemnly cursed Robert Browning. He cursed him eating, drinking, and sleeping. And then he took all his volumes and, disposing them carefully in the fireplace, he set light to them.

'I wish,' he said, 'that I could put the Poet there too.' I think he would have done it, this mild and gentle-hearted stranger, so strongly was his spirit moved to wrath.

He could not stay any longer in the room. It seemed to be haunted with ghosts of unintelligible sentences; things in familiar garb, which floated before his eyes and presented faces of inscrutable mystery. He seized his hat and fled.

He went straight to Jack Dunquerque's club, and found that hero in the reading-room.

'I have a favour to ask you,' he began in a hurried and nervous manner. 'If you have not yet asked Mr. Robert Browning to the little spread next week, don't.'

'Certainly not, if you wish it. Why?'

'Because, sir, I have spent eight hours over his works.'

Jack laughed.

'And you think you have gone off your head? I'll tell you a secret. Everybody does at first; and then we all fall into the dodge, and go about pretending to understand him.'

'But the meaning, Mr. Dunquerque, the meaning?'

'Hush! he *hasn't got any*. Only no one dares to say so, and it's intellectual to admire him.'

'Well, Mr. Dunquerque, I guess I don't want to see that writer at my dinner, anyhow.'

'Very well then. He shall not be asked.'

'Another day like this, and you may bury me with my boots on. Come with me somewhere, and have dinner as far away from those volumes of Mr. Browning as we can get in the time.'

They dined at Greenwich. In the course of the

next three days Gilead Beck read diligently. He did not master the three hundred volumes, but he got through some of the works of every writer, taking them in turn.

The result was a glorious and inextricable mess. Carlyle, Swinburne, Huxley, Darwin, Tennyson, and all of them were hopelessly jumbled in his brains. He mixed up the *Sartor Resartus* with the *Missing Link*, confounded the history of *Frederick the Great* with that of *Queen Elizabeth*, and thought that *Maud* and *Atalanta in Calydon* were written by the same poet. But time went on, and the Wednesday evening, to which he looked forward with so much anxiety and pride, rapidly drew near.

CHAPTER XII.

'Why, she is cold to all the world.'

And while Gilead Beck was setting himself to repair in a week the defects of his early education, Jack Dunquerque was spending his days hovering round the light of Phillis's eyes. The infatuated youth frequented the house as if it was his own. He liked it, Mrs. L'Estrange liked it, and Phillis liked it. Agatha looked with matronly suspicion for indications and proofs of love in her ward's face. She saw none, because Phillis was not in love at all. Jack to her was the first friend she made on coming out of her shell. Very far, indeed, from being in love. Jack looked too for any of those signs of mental agitation which accompany, or are supposed to accompany, the birth of love. There were none. Her face lit up when she saw him; she treated him with the frankness of a girl who tells her brother everything; but she did not blush when she saw him, nor was she ever otherwise than the sweetest and lightest-hearted of sisters. He knew it, and he groaned to think of

it. The slightest sign would have encouraged him to speak; the smallest indication that Phillis felt something for him of what he felt for her would have been to him a command to tell what was in his heart. But she made no sign. It was Jack's experience, perhaps, which taught him that he is a fool who gives his happiness to a woman before he has learned to divine her heart. Those ever make the most foolish marriages who are most ignorant of the sex. Hooker the Judicious is a case in point, and many a ghostly man could, from his country parsonage, tell the same tale.

Jack was not like the Judicious Divine; he was wary, though susceptible; he had his share of craft and subtlety; and yet he was in love, in spite of all that craft, with a girl who only liked him in return.

Had he possessed greater power of imagination he would have understood that he was expecting what was impossible. You cannot get wine out of an empty bottle, nor reap corn without first sowing the seed; and he forgot that Phillis, who was unable to read novels, knew nothing, positively nothing, of that great passion of Love which makes its victims half divine. It was always necessary, in thinking of this girl, to remember her thirteen years of captivity. Jack, more than any other person, not excepting

Agatha L'Estrange, knew what she would say and think on most things. Only in this matter of love he was at fault. Here he did not know, because here he was selfish. To all the world except Jack and Agatha she was an *impossible* girl ; she said things that no other girl would have said ; she thought as no one else thought. To all those who live in a tight little island of their own, fortified by triple batteries of dogma, she was impossible. But to those who accepted and comprehended the conditions of Phillis's education she was possible, real, charming, and full of interest.

Jack continually thought what Phillis would say and what she would think. For her sake he noticed the little things around him, the things among which we grow up unobservant. We see so little for the most part. Things to eat and drink interest us ; things that please the eye ; fair women and rare wine. We are like cattle grazing on the slopes of the Alps. Around us rise the mountains, with their ever-changing marvels of light and colour ; the sunlight flashes from their peaks ; the snow-slopes stretch away and upwards to the deep blues beyond in curves as graceful as the line of woman's beauty ; at our feet is the belt of pines perfumed and warmed by the summer air ; the mountain stream leaps, bubbles, and laughs,

rushing from the prison of its glacier cave; high overhead soars the Alpine eagle; the shepherds jodel in the valleys; the rapid echoes roll the song up into the immeasurable silence of the hills,—and amid all this we browse and feed, eyes downward turned.

So this young man, awakened by the quick sympathies of the girl he loved, lifted his head, taught by her, and tried to catch, he too, something of the childlike wonder, the appreciative admiration, the curious enthusiasm with which she saw everything. Most men's thoughts are bound by the limits of their club at night, and their chambers or their offices by day; the suns rise and set, and the outward world is unregarded. Jack learned from Phillis to look at these unregarded things. Such simple pleasures as a sunset, the light upon the river, the wild flowers on the bank, he actually tasted with delight, provided that she was beside him. And after a day of such Arcadian joys, he would return to town, and find the club a thirsty desert.

If Phillis had known anything about love, she would have fallen in love with Jack long before; but she did not. Yet he made headway with her, because he became almost necessary to her life. She looked for his coming; he brought her things he had

collected in his 'globe trotting;' he told her stories of adventure; he ruined himself in pictures; and then he looked for the love softening of her eyes, and it came not at all.

Yet Jack was a lovable sort of young man in maidens' eyes. Everybody liked him to begin with. He was, like David, a youth of a cheerful, if not of a ruddy, countenance. Agatha L'Estrange remarked of him that it did her good to meet cheerful young men—they were so scarce. 'I know quantities of young men, Phillis, my dear; and I assure you that most of them are enough to break a woman's heart even to think of. There is the athletic young man—he is dreadful indeed, only his time soon goes by; and there is the young man who talks about getting more brain power. To be sure he generally looks as if he wants it. There is the young man who ought to turn red and hot when the word Prig is used. There is the bad young man who keeps betting-books; and the miserable young man who grovels and flops in a Ritualist church. I know young men who are envious and backbite their friends; and young men who aspire to be somebody else; and young men who pose as infidels, and would rather be held up to execration in a paper than not be mentioned at all. But, my dear, I don't know anybody who is so cheerful and con-

tented as Jack. He isn't clever and learned, but he doesn't want to be; he isn't sharp, and will never make money, but he is better without it; and he is true, I am sure.'

Agatha unconsciously used the word in the sense which most women mean when they speak of a man's truth. Phillis understood it to mean that Jack Dunquerque did not habitually tell fibs, and thought the remark superfluous. But it will be observed that Agatha was fighting Jack's battle for him.

After all Jack might have taken heart had he thought that all these visits and all this interest in himself were but the laying of the seed, which might grow into a goodly tree.

'If only she would look as if she cared for me, Tommy,' he bemoaned to Ladds.

'Hang it! can't expect a girl to begin making eyes at you.'

'Eyes! Phillis make eyes! Tommy, as you grow older you grow coarser. It's a great pity. That comes of this club life. Always smoking and playing cards.'

Tommy grinned. Virtue was as yet a flower new to Jack Dunquerque's buttonhole, and he wore it with a pride difficult to dissemble.

'Better go and have it out with Colquhoun,' Tommy advised. 'He won't care. He's taken up with his old flame, Mrs. Cassilis, again. Always dangling at her heels, I'm told. Got no time to think of Miss Fleming. Great fool, Colquhoun. Always was a fool, I believe. Might have gone after flesh and blood instead of a marble statue. Wonder how Cassilis likes it.'

'There you go,' cried Jack impatiently. 'Men are worse than women. At Twickenham one never hears this foolish sort of gossip.'

'Suppose not. Flowers and music, muffin, tea, and spoons. Well, the girl's worth it, Jack; the more flowers and music you get the better it will be for you. But go and square it with Colquhoun.'

CHAPTER XIII.

'A right royal banquet.'

At seven o'clock on the great Wednesday Gilead Beck was pacing restlessly his inner room, the small apartment which formed his sanctum, waiting to receive his guests. All the preparations were complete: a quartette of singers was in readiness, with a piano, to discourse sweet music after the dinner; the noblest banquet ever ordered at the Langham was timed for a quarter to eight punctually; the wine was in ice; the waiters were adding the last touches to the artistic decorations of a table which, laid for thirteen only, might have been prepared for the Prince of Wales. In fact, when the bill came up a few days later, even Gilead Beck, man of millions, quailed for a moment before its total. Think of the biggest bill you ever had at Véfour's—for francs read pounds, and then multiply by ten; think of the famous Lord Warden bill for the Emperor Napoleon when he landed in all his glory, and then consider

that the management of the Langham is in no way behind that of the Dover hostelry. But this was to come, and when it did come, was received lightly.

Gilead Beck took a last look at the dinner-table. The few special injunctions he had given were carried out; they were not many, only that the shutters should be partly closed and the curtains drawn, so that they might dine by artificial light; that the table and the room should be entirely illuminated by wax-candles, save for one central lamp, in which should be burning, like the sacred flame of Vesta, his own rock-oil. He also stipulated that the flowers on the table should be disposed in shallow vessels, so as to lie low, and not interfere with the freedom of the eyes across the table. Thus there was no central tower of flowers and fruit. To compensate for this he allowed a whole bower of exotics to be erected round the room.

The long wall opposite the window was decorated with his famous piece by an unknown master, bought of Bartholomew Burls, known as 'Sisera and Jael.' As the frame had not yet been made, it was wreathed about for its whole length and breadth with flowers. The other pictures, also wreathed with flowers, were genuine originals, bought of the same famous col-

lector. For the end of the room Gilead Beck had himself designed, and partly erected with his own hands, an allegorical trophy. From a pile of books neatly worked in cork, there sprang a jet of water illuminated on either side by a hidden lamp burning rock-oil. He had wished to have the fountain itself of oil, but was overruled by Jack Dunquerque. Above, by an invisible wire, hovered a golden butterfly in gilded paper. And on either side hung a flag—that on the right displaying the Stars and Stripes, that on the left the equally illustrious Union Jack.

At every man's place lay a copy of the *menu*, in green and gold, elaborately decorated, a masterpiece of illumination. Gilead Beck, after making quite sure that nothing was neglected, took his own, and, retiring to the inner room, read it for the fiftieth time with a pleasure as intense as that of the young author who reads his first proof-sheet. It consisted of a large double card. On the top of the left-hand side was painted in colours and gold a butterfly. And that side read as follows (I regret that the splendours of the original cannot be here reproduced):

Langham Hotel,

May 20, 1875.

DINNER IN HONOUR OF LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART,

GIVEN BY

GILEAD P. BECK,

AN OBSCURE AMERICAN CITIZEN RAISED AT LEXINGTON,
WHO STRUCK ILE IN A MOST SURPRISING MANNER
BY THE HELP OF

THE GOLDEN BUTTERFLY,

BUT WHO DESPISES SHODDY AND RESPECTS GENIUS.

Representatives of Literature, Art, and Science.

THOMAS CARLYLE,
ALFRED TENNYSON,
JOHN RUSKIN,
ALGERNON SWINBURNE,
GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA,
CHARLES DARWIN,
PROFESSOR HUXLEY,
FREDERICK LEIGHTON, R.A.,
CORNELIUS JAGENAL, AND
HUMPHREY JAGENAL,

WITH

CAPTAIN LADDS, THE HON. RONALD DUNQUERQUE, AND
GILEAD P. BECK.

After this preamble, which occupied a whole side of the double card, followed the *menu* itself.

I unwillingly suppress this. There are weaker brethren who might on reading it feel dissatisfied with the plain lamb and rhubarb-tart of the sweet spring season. As a present dignitary of the Church, now a colonial bishop, once a curate, observed to me many years ago, *à propos* of thirst, university reminiscences, a neighbouring public-house, a craving for tobacco, and the fear of being observed, 'These weaker brethren are a great nuisance.'

Let it suffice that at the Langham they still speak of Gilead Beck's great dinner with tears in their eyes. I believe a copy of the green-and-gold card is framed, and hung in the office so as to catch the eye of poorer men when they are ordering dinners. It makes those of lower nature feel envious, and even takes the conceit out of the nobler kind.

Gilead Beck, dressed for the banquet, was nervous and restless. It seemed as if, for the first time, his wealth was about to bring him something worth having. His face, always grave, was as solemn as if he were fixing it for his own funeral. From time to time he drew a paper from his pocket and read it over. Then he replaced it, and with lips and arms went through the action of speaking. It was his

speech of the evening, which he had carefully written and imperfectly committed to memory. Like a famous American lawyer, the attitude he assumed was to stand bent a little forward, the feet together, the left hand hanging loosely at his side, while he brandished the right above his head.

In this attitude he was surprised by the Twins, who came a quarter of an hour before the time. They were dressed with great care, having each the sweetest little eighteenpenny bouquet, bought from the little shop at the right hand of the Market as you go in, where the young lady makes it up before your eyes, sticks the wire into it, and pins it at your buttonhole with her own fair hands. Each brother in turn winked at her during the operation. A harmless wink, but it suggested no end of possible devilries should these two young gentlemen of fifty find themselves loose upon the town. Those who saw it thought of Mohocks, and praised the Lord for the New police.

They both looked very nice; they entered with a jaunty step, a careless backward toss of the head, parted lips, and bright eyes which faced fearlessly a critical but reverent world. Nothing but the crow's-feet showed that the first glow of youth was over; nothing but a few streaks of gray in Humphrey's

beard and in Cornelius's hair showed that they were nearing the Indian summer of life. Mr. Beck, seeing them enter so fresh, so bright, and so beaming, was more than ever puzzled at their age. He was waiting for them in a nervous and rather excitable state of mind, as becomes one who is about to find himself face to face with the greatest men of his time.

'You, gentlemen,' he said, 'will sit near me, one each side, if you will be so kind, just to lend a helping hand to the talk when it flags. Phew! it will be a rasper, the talk of to-day. I've read all their works, if I can only remember them, and I bought the *History of English Literature* yesterday to get a grip of the hull subject. No use. I haven't got farther than Chaucer. Do you think they can talk about Chaucer? He wrote the *Canterbury Tales*.'

'Cornelius,' said Humphrey, 'you will be able to lead the conversation to the Anglo-Saxon period.'

'That period is too early, brother Humphrey,' said Cornelius. 'We shall trust to you to turn the stream in the direction of the Renaissance.'

Humphrey shifted in his seat uneasily. Why this unwillingness in either Twin to assume the lead on topics that had engaged their attention for twenty years?

Mr. Beck shook his head.

'I most wish now,' he said, 'that I hadn't asked them. But it's a thunderin' great honour. Mr. Dunquerque did it all for me. That young gentleman met these great writers, I suppose, in the baronial halls of his brother, the Earl of Isleworth.'

'Do we know Lord Isleworth?' asked Cornelius of Humphrey.

'Lord Isleworth, Cornelius? No; I rather think we have never met him,' said Humphrey to Cornelius.

'None of your small names to-night,' said Gilead Beck, with serious and even pious joy. 'The Lord Mayor may have them at Guildhall. Mine are the big guns. I did want to get a special report for my own *Gazette*, but Mr. Dunquerque thought it better not to have it. P'r'aps 'twould have seemed kind o' shoddy. I ought to be satisfied with the private honour, and not want the public glory of it. What would they say in Boston if they knew, or even in New York?'

'You should have a dinner for Poets alone,' said Humphrey, anxious for his brother.

'Or for Artists only,' said Cornelius.

'Wal, gentlemen, we shall get on. As there's five minutes to spare, would you like to give an

opinion on the wine-list, and oblige me by your advice?'

The Twins perused the latter document with sparkling eyes. It was a noble list. Gilead Beck's plan was simple. He just ordered the best of everything. For Sauterne, he read Château Iquem; for Burgundy, he took Chambertin; for Claret, Château Lafitte; for Champagne, Heidsieck; for Sherry, Montilla; a Box Boutel wine for Hock; and for Port the '34. Never before, in all its experiences of Americans, Russians, and returned colonials, had the management of the Langham so 'thorough' a wine-bill to make out as for this dinner.

'Is that satisfactory, gentlemen?'

'Cornelius, what do you think?'

'Humphrey, I think as you do; and that is, that this princely selection shows Mr. Beck's true appreciation of Literature and Art.'

'It is kind of you, gentlemen, to say so. I talked over the dinner with the *chef*, and I have had the menou printed, as you see it, in gilt and colours, which I am given to understand is the correct thing at the Guildhall. Would you like to look at that?'

They showed the greatest desire to look at it. Humphrey read it aloud with emphasis. While he read and while his brother listened, Mr. Beck thought

they seemed a good deal older than before. Perhaps that was because their faces were turned to the light, and the reflection through an open window of the sinking sun showed up the crow's-feet round their eyes.

'Humph! Plovers' eggs. Clear mullagatawny; clear, Cornelius. Turtle-fins. Salmon—I translate the French. Turbot. Lochleven trout—'

'Very good indeed, so far,' said Cornelius, with a palpable smack of his lips.

'Lamb-cutlets with peas—a simple but excellent dish; aspic of *foie gras*—ah, two or three things which I cannot translate; a preparation of pigeon; haunch of venison; yes—'

'An excellent dinner, indeed,' said Cornelius. 'Pray go on, Humphrey.'

He began to feel like Sancho in Barataria. So good a dinner seemed really impossible.

'Duckling; cabob curry of chicken-liver with Bombay ducks—really, Mr. Beck, this dinner is worth a dukedom.'

'It is indeed,' said Cornelius feelingly.

'Canvas-back—ah!—from Baltimore—Cornelius, this is almost too much; apricots in jelly, ice-pudding, grated Parmesan, strawberries, melons, peaches, nectarines (and only May, Cornelius!),

pines, West India bananas, custard apples from Jamaica, and dried letchis from China, Cornelius.'

Humphrey handed the document to his brother with a look of appeal which said volumes. One sentence in the volumes was clearly, 'Say something appropriate.'

Quoth Cornelius, deeply moved,

'This new Mæcenas ransacks the corners of the earth to find a fitting entertainment for men of genius. Humphrey, you shall paint him.'

'Cornelius, you shall sing his praises.'

By a simultaneous impulse the Twins turned to their patron, and presented each a right hand. Gilead Beck had only one right hand to give. He gave that to Cornelius, and the left to Humphrey.

While this sacrament of friendship was proceeding was heard a sound as of many men simultaneously stifling much laughter. The door opened, and the other guests arrived in a body. They were preceded by Jack Dunquerque, and on entering the room dropped, as if by word of command, into line, like soldiers on parade. Seven of them were strangers, but Captain Ladds brought up the rear.

They were, as might be expected of such great men, a remarkable assemblage. At the extreme

right stood a tall well-set-up old man, with tangled gray locks, long gray eyebrows, and an immense gray beard. His vigorous bearing belied the look of age, and what part of his face could be seen had a remarkably youthful appearance.

Next to him were other two aged men, one of whom was bent and bowed by the weight of years. They also had large eyebrows and long gray beards; and Mr. Beck remarked at once that so far as could be judged from the brightness of their eyes they had wonderfully preserved their mental strength. The others were younger men, one of them being apparently a boy of eighteen or so.

Then followed a ceremony like a *levée*. Gilead Beck stood in the centre of the room, the table having been pushed back into the corner. He was supported, right and left, by the Twins, who formed a kind of Court, and above whom he towered grandly with his height of six feet two. He held himself as erect, and looked as solemn, as if he were the President of the United States. The Twins, for their part, looked a little as if they were his sons.

Jack Dunquerque acted as Lord Chamberlain or Master of the Ceremonies. He wore an anxious face, and looked round among the great men whom he preceded, as soon as they had all filed in, with a

glance which might have meant admonition, had that been possible. And, indeed, a broad smile, which was hovering like the sunlight upon their venerable faces, disappeared at the frown of this young gentleman. It was very curious.

It was in the Grand Manner—that peculiar to Courts—in which Jack Dunquerque presented the first of the distinguished guests to Mr. Beck.

'Sir,' he said, with low and awe-struck voice, 'before you stands Thomas Carlyle.'

A thrill ran through the American's veins as he grasped the hand which had written so many splendid things, and looked into the eyes which harboured such splendid thought. Then he said in softened tones, because his soul was moved: 'This is a proud moment, sir, for Gilead P. Beck. I never thought to have shaken by the hand the author of the *French Revolution* and the *Stones of Venice*.'

(It really was unfortunate that his reading had been so miscellaneous during the four days preceding the dinner.)

The venerable Philosopher opened his mouth and spake. His tones were deep and his utterance slow.

'You are proud, Mr. Beck? The only Pride should be the pride of work. Beautiful the mean-

est thing that works; even the rusty and unmusical Meatjack. All else belongs to the outlook of him whom men call Beelzebub. The brief Day passes with its poor paper crowns in tinsel gilt; Night is at hand with her silences and her veracities. What hast thou done? All the rest is phantasmal. Work only remains. Say, brother, what is thy work?'

'I have struck Ile,' replied Gilead proudly, feeling that his Work (with a capital W) had been well and thoroughly done.

The Philosopher stepped aside.

Jack Dunquerque brought up the next.

'Mr. Beck, Alfred Tennyson, the Poet Laureate.'

This time it was a man with robust frame and strongly-marked features. He wore a long black beard, streaked with gray and rather ragged, with a ragged mass of black hair, looking as he did at Oxford when they made him an honorary D.C.L., and an undergraduate from the gallery asked him politely, '*Did* they wake and call you early?'

'Mr. Tennyson,' said Mr. Beck, 'I do assure you, sir, that this is the kindest thing that has been done to me since I came to England. I hope I see you well, sir. I read your *Fifine at the Fair*, sir—no, that was the other man's—I mean, sir, your

Songs before Sunrise; and I congratulate you. We've got some poets on our side of the water, sir. I've written poetry myself for the papers. We've got Longfellow and Lowell, and, take out you and Mr. Swinburne, with them we'll meet your lot.'

Mr. Tennyson opened his mouth to speak, but shut it again in silence, and looking at Jack mournfully, as if he had forgotten something, he stepped aside.

Jack presented another.

'Mr. John Ruskin.'

A sharp-featured clever-looking man with gray locks and shaven face. He seized Mr. Beck by the hand and spoke first, not giving his host time to utter his little set speech.

'I welcome,' he said, 'one of our fellow-workers from the other side of the Atlantic. I cannot utter to you what I would. We all see too dimly as yet what are our great world-duties, for we try and outline their enlarging shadows. You in America do not seek peace as Menahem sought it, when he gave the King of Assyria a thousand pieces of silver. You fight for your peace, and you have it. You do not buy what you want; you take it. That is strength; that is harmony. You do not sit at home

lisping comfortable prayers; you go out and work. For many a year to come, sir, the sword of your nation shall be whetted to save and to subdue.'

He stopped suddenly, and closed his lips with a snap.

Mr. Beck turned rather helplessly to the Twins. He wanted a diversion to this utterly unintelligible harangue. They stared straight before them, and pretended to be absorbed in meditation.

'Mr. Beck, Mr. Swinburne. Deaf people think Mr. Browning is musical, sir; but all people allow Mr. Swinburne to be the most musical of poets.'

It was the very young man. He stood before his host and laughed aloud.

'Sir,' said Mr. Beck, 'I have read some of your verses. I can't say what they were about, but I took to singin' them softly as I read them, and I seemed to be in a green field, lyin' out among the flowers while the bees were bummin' around and the larks were liftin' their hymns in the sky.'

Mr. Swinburne laughed again and made way for the next comer.

'Mr. Beck, let me introduce Mr. George Augustus Sala.'

'This,' said the Man of Oil, 'is indeed a pleasure.

Mr. Sala, when I say that I am an old and personal friend of Colonel Quagg, you will be glad to meet me.'

Contrary to reasonable expectation, the face of Mr. Sala showed no sign of joy at the reminiscence. He only looked rather helplessly at Jack Dunquerque, who turned red, and brought up the rest of his men together, as if to get the introductions over quickly.

'Mr. Beck, these gentlemen are Mr. Darwin, Professor Huxley, and Mr. Frederick Leighton. Ladds you know well enough already. Step up, Tommy.'

Gilead Beck shook hands with each, and then, drawing himself up to his full height, laid his left hand within his waistcoat, brandished his right above his head with a preliminary flourish, and began his speech.

'Gentlemen all,' he said, 'I am more than proud to make your acquaintance. Across the foaming waves of the mighty Atlantic there is a land whose institootions—known to Mr. Sala—air not unlike your own, whose literature is your own up to a hundred years ago ['Hear, hear!' from Cornelius], whose language is the same as yours. We say hard things of each other, gentlemen; but the hard things are

said on the low levels, not on the heights where you and your kindred spirits dwell. No, gentlemen,'—here he raised both arms and prepared for a rhetorical burst,—'when the American eagle, proudly bearing the stars and stripes—'

'Dinner on the table, sir!' bawled the head-waiter, throwing open the doors with the grandest flourish and standing in the open doorway.

'Hear, hear!' cried Humphrey a little late, because he meant the cheer for the speech, and it sounded like a joy-bell ringing for the announcement of dinner. Mr. Beck thought it rather rude, but he did not say so, and vented his wrath upon the waiter.

'Great Jehoshaphat!' he cried, 'can't you see when a gentleman is on the stump? Who the devil asked you to shove in?'

'Never mind,' said Jack irreverently. 'Spout the rest after dinner.'

A sigh of relief escaped the lips of all, and the party, headed, after some demur, by the host, who was escorted, one on each side, like a great man with his private secretary, by the Twins, passed into the dining-room.

Oddly enough, when their host passed on before them, the guests turned to each other, and the same

extraordinary smile which Jack Dunquerque checked on their first appearance passed from one to the other. Why should Alfred Tennyson look in the face of Thomas Carlyle and laugh? What secret relationship is there between John Ruskin, Swinburne, and George Augustus Sala, that they should snigger and grin on catching each other's eyes? And, if one is to go on asking questions, why did Jack Dunquerque whisper in an agitated tone, 'For Heaven's sake, Tom, and you fellows, keep it up'?

There was some little difficulty in seating the guests, because they all showed a bashful reluctance to sitting near their host, and crowded together to the lower end. At last, however, they were settled down. Mr. Carlyle, who, with a modesty worthy of his great name, seized the lowest chair of all—that on the left of Jack Dunquerque, who was to occupy the end of the table—was promptly dragged out and forcibly led to the right of the host. Facing him was Alfred Tennyson. The Twins, one on each side, came next. Mr. Sala faced John Ruskin. The others disposed themselves as they pleased.

A little awkwardness was caused at the outset by the host, who, firm in the belief that Professor Huxley was in the Moody and Sankey line, called upon him to say Grace. The invitation was warmly

seconded by all the rest, but the Professor, greatly confused, blushed, and after a few moments of reflection was fain to own that he knew no Grace. It was a strange confession, Gilead Beck thought, for a clergyman. The singers, however—Miss Claribelle, Signors Altotenoro, Bassoprofondo, and Mr. Plantagenet Simpkins—performed *Non nobis* with great feeling and power, and dinner began.

It was then that Gilead Beck first conceived, against his will, suspicion of the Twins. So far from being the backbone and stay of the whole party, so far from giving a lead to the conversation, and leading up to the topics loved by the guests, they gave themselves unreservedly and from the very first to 'tucking in.' They went at the dinner with the go of a Rugby boy—a young gentleman of Eton very soon teaches himself that the stomach is not to be trifled with.

So did the rest. Considering the overwhelming amount of genius at the table, and the number of years represented by the guests collectively, it was really wonderful to contemplate the vigour with which all, including the octogenarian, attacked the courses, sparing none. Could it have been believed by an outsider that the author of *Maud* was so passionately critical over the wine? It is sad to be

disillusionised, but pleasant, on the other hand, to think that you are no longer an outsider. Individually the party would have disappointed their host, but he did not allow himself to be disappointed. Mr. Beck expected a battery of wit. He heard nothing but laudation of the wine and remarks upon the cookery. No anecdotes, no criticism, no literary talk, no poetical enthusiasm.

'In my country, sir,' he began, glancing reproachfully at the Twins, whose noses were over their plates, and feeling his way feebly to a conversation with Carlyle,—'in my country, sir, I hope we know how to appreciate what we cannot do ourselves.'

Mr. Carlyle stared for a moment. Then he replied,

'Hope you do, Mr. Beck, I'm sure. Didn't know you'd got so good a *chef* at the Langham.'

This was disheartening, and for a space no one spoke.

Presently Mr. Carlyle looked round the table as if he was about to make an utterance.

Humphrey Jagenal, who happened at the moment to have nothing before him, raised his hand and said solemnly, 'Hush!' Cornelius bent forward in an attitude of respectful attention.

Said the Teacher,

'Clear mullagatawny 's about the best thing I know to begin a dinner upon. Some fellows like Palestine soup. That's a mistake.'

'The greatest minds,' said Cornelius to the Poet Laureate, 'condescend to the meanest things.'

''Gad!' said Tennyson, 'if you call such a dinner as this mean, I wonder what you'd call respectable.'

Cornelius felt snubbed. But he presently rallied and went on again. It was between the courses.

'Pray, Mr. Carlyle,' he asked, with the sweetest smile, 'what was the favourite soup of Herr Teufelsdröckh?'

'Who?' asked the Philosopher. 'Beg your pardon, Herr how much?'

'From your own work, Mr. Carlyle,' Jack sang out from his end. It was remarkable to notice how anxiously he followed the conversation.

'O, ah! quite so,' said Mr. Carlyle. 'Well, you see, the fact is that—Jack Dunquerque knows.'

This was disconcerting too, and the more because everybody began to laugh. What did they laugh at?

The dinner went on. Gilead Beck, silent and grave, sat at the head of the table, watching his guests. He ought, he said to himself, to be a proud

man that day. But there were one or two crumpled rose-leaves in his bed. One thing was that he could not for the life of him remember each man's works, so as to address him in honeyed tones of adulation. And he also rightly judged that the higher a man's position in the world of letters, the more you must pile up the praise. No doubt the late lamented George the Fourth, the Fourteenth Louis, and John Stuart Mill grew at last to believe in the worth of the praise-painting which surrounded their names.

And then the Twins were provoking. Only one attempt on the part of Cornelius, at which everybody laughed. And nothing at all from Humphrey.

Carlyle and Tennyson, for their part, sat perfectly silent. Lower down—below the Twins, that is—Sala, Huxley, and the others were conversing freely, but in a low tone. And when Gilead Beck caught a few words it seemed to him as if they talked of horse-racing.

Presently, to his relief, John Ruskin leaned forward and spoke to him.

'I have been studying lately, Mr. Beck, the Art growth of America.'

'Is that so, sir? And perhaps you have got something to tell my countrymen?'

'Perhaps, Mr. Beck. You doubtless know my

principle, that Art should interpret, not create. You also know that I have preached all my life the doctrine that where Art is followed for Art's own sake, there infallibly ensues a distinction of intellectual and moral principles, while, devoted honestly and self-forgetfully to the clear statement and record of the facts of the universe, Art is always helpful and beneficial to mankind. So much you know, Mr. Beck, I'm sure.'

'Well, sir, if you would not mind saying that over again—slow—I might be able to say I know it.'

'I have sometimes gone on to say,' pursued Mr. Ruskin, 'that a time has always hitherto come when, having reached a singular perfection, Art begins to contemplate that perfection and to deduce rules from it. Now all this has nothing to do with the relations between Art and mental development in the United States of America.'

'I am glad to hear that, sir,' said Gilead Beck, a little relieved.

He looked for help to the Twins, but he leaned upon a slender reed, for they were both engaged upon the duckling, and proffered no help at all. They did not even seem to listen. The dinner was far advanced, their cheeks were red and their eyes were sparkling.

'What is it all about?' Mr. Carlyle murmured across the table to Tennyson.

'Don't know,' replied the Maker. 'Didn't think he had it in him.'

Could these two great men be jealous of Mr. Ruskin's fame?

'Your remarks, Mr. Ruskin,' said the host, 'sound very pretty. But I should like to have them before me in black and white, so I could tackle them quietly for an hour. Then I'd tell you what I think. I was reading, last week, all your works.'

'All my works in a week!' cried Ruskin. 'Sir, my works require loving thought and lingering tender care. You must get up early in the morning with them, you must watch the drapery of the clouds at sunrise when you read them, you must take them into the field at spring-time and mark, as you meditate on the words of the printed page, the young leaflets breathing low in the sunshine. Then, as the thoughts grow and glow in the pure ether of your mind—hock, if you please—you will rise above the things of the earth, your wings will expand, you will care for nothing of the mean and practical—I will take a little more duckling—your faculties will be woven into a cunning subordination with the wondrous works of Nature, and all will be beautiful

alike, from a blade of grass to a South American forest.'

'There are very good forests in the Sierra Nevada,' said Mr. Beck, who just understood the last words; 'we needn't go to South America for forests, I guess.'

'That, Mr. Beck, is what you will get from a study of my works. But a week—a week, Mr. Beck!'

He shook his head with a whole library of reproach.

'My time was limited, Mr. Ruskin, and I hope to go through your books with more study, now I have had the pleasure of meeting you. What I was going to say was, that I am sorry not to be able to talk with you gentlemen on the subjects you like best, because things have got mixed, and I find I can't rightly remember who wrote what.'

'Thank goodness!' murmured Mr. Tennyson, under his breath.

Presently the diners began to thaw, and something like general conversation set in.

About the grated Parmesan period, Mr. Beck observed with satisfaction that they were all talking together. The Twins were the loudest. With flushed faces and bright eyes they were laying down

the law to their neighbours in Poetry and Art. Cornelius gave Mr. Tennyson some home truths on his later style, which the Poet Laureate received without so much as an attempt to defend himself. Humphrey, from the depth of his Roman experiences, treated Mr. Ruskin to a brief treatise on his imperfections as a critic, and Mr. Leighton to some remarks on his paintings, which those great men heard with a polite stare. Gilead Beck observed also that Jack Dunquerque was trying hard to keep the talk in literary grooves, though with small measure of success. For as the dinner went on the conversation resolved itself into a general discussion on horses, events, Aldershot, Prince's, polo, the drama from its lightest point of view, and such topics as might perhaps be looked for at a regimental mess, but hardly at a dinner of Literature. It was strange that the two greatest men among them all, Carlyle and Tennyson, appeared to be as interested as any in this light talk.

The Twins were out of it altogether. If there was one thing about which they were absolutely ignorant, it was the Turf. Probably they had never seen a race in their lives. They talked fast and a little at random, but chiefly to each other, because no one, Mr. Beck observed, took any notice of what

they said. Also, they drank continuously, and their host remarked that to the flushed cheeks and the bright eye was rapidly being added thickness of speech.

Mr. Beck rose solemnly, at the right moment, and asked his guests to allow him two or three toasts only. The first, he said, was England and America. Ile, he said briefly, had not yet been found in the old country, and so far she was behind America. But she did her best; she bought what she could not dig.

By special request of the host Mademoiselle Claribelle sang 'Old John Brown lies a-mouldering in his grave.'

The next toast, Mr. Beck said, was one due to the peculiar position of himself. He would not waste their time in telling his own story, but he would only say that until the Golden Butterfly brought him to Limerick City and showed him Ile, he was but a poor galoot. Therefore, he asked them to join him in a sentiment. He would give them, 'More Ile.'

Signor Altotenoro, an Englishman who had adopted an Italian name, sang 'The Light of other Days.'

Then Mr. Beck rose for the third time and

begged the indulgence of his friends. He spoke slowly and with a certain sadness.

'I am not,' he said, 'going to orate. You did not come here, I guess, to hear me pay out chin music. Not at all. You came to do honour to an American. Gentlemen, I am an obscure American; I am half educated; I am a man lifted out of the ranks. In our country—and I think in yours as well, though some of you have got handles to your names—that is not a thing to apologise for. No, gentlemen. I only mention it because it does me the greater honour to have received you. But I can read and I can think. I see here to-night some of the most honoured names in England, and I can tell you all what I was goin' to say before dinner, only the misbegotten cuss of a waiter took the words out of my mouth, that I feel this kindness greatly, and I shall never forget it. I did think, gentlemen, that you would have been too many for me in the matter of tall talk, but exceptin' Mr. Ruskin, to whom I am grateful for his beautiful language, though it didn't all get in, not one of you has made me feel my own uneducated ignorance. That is kind of you, and I thank you for it. It was true feeling, Mr. Carlyle, which prompted you, sir, to give the conversation such a turn that I might join in without bein'

ashamed or makin' myself feel or'nary. Gentlemen, what a man like me has to guard against is shoddy. If I talk Literature, it's shoddy. If I talk Art, it's shoddy. Because I know neither Literature nor Art. If I pretend to be what I am not, it's shoddy. Therefore, gentlemen, I thank you for leavin' the tall talk at home, and tellin' me about your races and your amusements. And I'll not ask you, either, to make any speeches; but if you'll allow me, I will drink your healths. Mr. Carlyle, sir, the English-speaking race is proud of you. Mr. Tennyson, our gells, I'm told, love your poems more than any others in this wide world. What an American gell loves is generally worth lovin', because she's no fool. Mr. Ruskin, if you'd come across the water you might learn a wrinkle yet in the matter of plain speech. Mr. Sala, we know you already over thar, and I shall be glad to tell the Reverend Colonel Quagg of your welfare when I see him. Mr. Swinburne, you air young, but you air getting on. Professor Huxley and Mr. Darwin, I shall read your sermons and your novels, and I shall be proud to have seen you at my table. Mr. Cornelius and Mr. Humphrey Jagenal, I would drink your healths too, if you were not sound asleep.' This was unfortunately the case; the Twins, having succumbed to

the mixture and quantity of the drinks almost before the wine went round once, were now leaning back in their chairs, slumbering with the sweetest of smiles. 'Captain Ladds, you know, sir, that you are always welcome. Mr. Dunquerque, you have done me another favour. Gentlemen all, I drink your health.'

'Jack,' whispered Mr. Swinburne, 'I call this a burning shame. He's a rattling good fellow this, and you must tell him.'

'I will some time; not now,' said Jack, looking remorseful. 'I haven't the heart. I thought he would have found us out long ago. I wonder how he'll take it.'

They had coffee and cigars, and presently Gilead Beck began telling about American trotting matches, which was interesting to everybody.

It was nearly twelve when Mr. Beck's guests departed.

Mr. Carlyle, in right of his seniority, solemnly 'up and spake.'

'Mr. Beck,' he said, 'you are a trump. Come down to the Derby with me, and we will show you a race worth twenty of your trotting. Good-night, sir. You've treated us like a prince.'

He grasped his hand with a grip which had all

its youthful vigour, and strode out of the room with the step of early manhood.

'A wonderful old man!' said Mr. Beck. 'Who would have thought it?'

The rest shook hands in silence, except Mr. Ruskin.

'I am sorry, Mr. Beck,' he said meekly, 'that the nonsense I talked at dinner annoyed you. It's always the way if a fellow tries to be clever; he overdoes it, and makes himself an ass. Good-night, sir, and I hope we shall meet on the racecourse next Wednesday.'

Mr. Beck was left alone with Jack Dunquerque, the waiter, and the Twins still sleeping.

'What am I to do with these gentlemen, sir?' asked the waiter.

Mr. Beck looked at them with a little disdain.

'Get John, and yank them both to bed, and leave a brandy-and-soda at their elbows in case they're thirsty in the night. Mr. Dunquerque and Captain Ladds, don't go yet. Let us have a cigar together in the little room.'

They sat in silence for a while. Then Jack said, with a good deal of hesitation:

'I've got something to tell you, Beck.'

'Then don't tell it to-night,' replied the Ame-

rican. 'I'm thinking over the evening, and I can't get out of my mind that I might have made a better speech. Seems as if I wasn't nigh grateful enough. Wal, it's done. Mr. Dunquerque, there is one thing which pleases me. Great authors are like the rest of us. They are powerful fond of racing; they shoot, they ride, and they hunt; they know how to tackle a dinner; and all of 'em, from Thomas Carlyle to young Mr. Swinburne, seem to love the gells alike. That's a healthy sign, sir. It shows that their hearts air in the right place. The world's bound to go on well, somehow, so long as its leaders like to talk of a pretty woman's eyes; because it's human. And then for me to hear these great men actually doing it! Why, Captain Ladds, it adds six inches to my stature to feel sure that they like what I like, and that, after all said and done, Alfred Tennyson and Gilead P. Beck are men and brothers.'

CHAPTER XIV.

'Greater humanity.'

The world, largely as it had unfolded itself to Phillis, consisted as yet to her wholly of the easy classes. That there were poor people in the country was a matter of hearsay. That is, she had caught a glimpse during a certain walk with Cæsar of a class whose ways were clearly not her ways, nor their manner of thought hers. She had now to learn—as a step to that wider sympathy first awakened by the butter-woman's baby—that there is a kind of folk who are more dangerous than picturesque, to be pitied rather than to be painted, to be schooled and disciplined rather than to be looked at.

She learned this lesson through Mrs. L'Estrange, whose laudable custom it was to pay periodical visits to a certain row of cottages. They were not nice cottages, but nasty. They faced an unrelenting ditch, noisome, green, and putrid. They were slatternly and out at elbows. The people who lived in them were unpleasant to look at or to think of; the men

belonged to the river-side—they were boat-cads and touts; and if there is any one pursuit more demoralising than another, it is that of launching boats into the river, handing the oars, and helping out the crew.

In the daytime the cottages were in the hands of the wives. Towards nightfall the men returned: those who had money enough were drunk; those who were sober envied those who were drunk. Both drunk and sober found scolding wives, squalid homes, and crying children. Both drunk and sober lay down with curses, and slept till the morning, when they awoke, and went forth again with the jocund curse of dawn.

Nothing so beautiful as the civilisation of the period. Half a mile from Agatha L'Estrange and Phillis Fleming were these cottages. Almost within earshot of a house where vice was unknown, or only dimly seen like a ghost at twilight, stood the hovels, where virtue was impossible, and goodness a dream of an unknown land. What notion do they have of the gentle life, these dwellers in misery and squalor? What fond ideas of wealth's power to procure unlimited gratification for the throat do they conceive, these men and women, whose only pleasure is to drink beer till they drop?

One day Phillis went there with Agatha.

It was such a bright warm morning, the river was so sparkling, the skies were so blue, the gardens were so sunny, the song of the birds so loud, the laburnums so golden, and the lilacs so glorious to behold, that the girl's heart was full of all the sweet thoughts which she had learned of others or framed for herself—thoughts of poets, which echoed in her brain and flowed down the current of her thoughts like the swans upon the river; happy thoughts of youth and innocence.

She walked beside her companion with light and elastic tread; she looked about her with the fresh unconscious grace that belongs to childhood; it was her greatest charm. But the contentment of her soul was rudely shaken—the beauty went out of the day—when Mrs. L'Estrange only lead her away from the leafy road, and took her into her 'Row.' There the long arms of the green trees were changed into protruding sticks, on which linen was hanging out to dry; the songs of the birds became the cry of children and the scolding of women; for flowers there was the iridescence on the puddles of soap-suds; for greenhouse were dirty windows and open doors, which looked into squalid interiors.

'I am going to see old Mrs. Medlicott,' said Mrs.

L'Estrange cheerfully, picking her accustomed way among the cabbage-stalks, wash-tubs, and other evidences of human habitation.

The women looked out of their houses and retired hastily. Presently they came out again, and stood every one at her door with a clean apron on, each prepared to lie like an ambassador, for the good of the family.

In a great chair by a fire there sat an old woman —a malignant old woman. She looked up and scowled at the ladies; then she looked at the fire and scowled; then she pointed to the corner and scowled again.

'Look at him,' she growled in a hoarse crescendo. 'Look at him, lying like a pig—like a pig. Do you hear?'

'I hear.'

The voice came from what Phillis took at first to be a heap of rags. She was right, because she could not see beneath the rags the supine form of a man.

Mrs. L'Estrange took no notice of the old woman's introduction to the human pig. That phenomenon repeated his answer:

'I hear. I'm her beloved grandson, ladies. I'm Jack-in-the-Water.'

'Get up and work. Go down to your river. Comes home and lies down, he does—yah! ye lazy pig; says he's goin' to have the horrors, he does—yah! ye drunken pig; prigs my money for drink—yah! ye thievin' pig. Get up and go out of the place. Leave me and the ladies to talk. Go, I say!'

Jack-in-the-Water arose slowly. He was a long-legged creature with shaky limbs, and when he stood upright his head nearly touched the rafters of the low unceiled room. And he had a face at sight of which Phillis shuddered—an animal face with no forehead; a cruel, bad, selfish face, all jowl and no front. His eyes were bloodshot and his lips were thick. He twitched and trembled all over—his legs trembled; his hands trembled; his cheeks twitched.

''Orrors?' he said in a husky voice. 'And should ha' had the 'orrors if I hadn't a took the money. Two-and-tuppence. Lemme go.'

He pushed past Phillis, who shrank in alarm, and disappeared.

'Well, Mrs. Medlicott, and how are we?' asked Mrs. L'Estrange in a cheerful voice—she took no manner of notice of the man.

'Worse. What have you got for me? Money? I want money. Flannel? I want flannel. Physic?

I want physic. Brandy? I want brandy very bad; I never wanted it so bad. What have you got? Gimme brandy and you shall read me a track.'

'You forget,' said Agatha, 'that I never read to you.'

'Let the young lady read, then. Come here, missy. Lord, Lord! Don'tee be afraid of an old woman as has got no teeth. Come now. Gimme your hand. Ay, ay, ay! Eh, eh, eh! Here's a pretty little hand.'

'Now, Mrs. Medlicott, you said you would not do that any more. You know it is all foolish wickedness.'

'Foolish wickedness!' echoed the Witch of Endor. 'Never after to-day, my lady. Come, my pretty lass, take off the glove and gimme the hand.'

Without knowing what she did, Phillis drew off the glove from her left hand. The old woman leaned forward in her chair and looked at the lines. She was a fierce and eager old woman. Life was strong in her yet, despite her fourscore years; her eyes were bright and fiery; her toothless gums chattered without speaking; her long lean fingers shook as they seized on the girl's dainty palm.

'Ay, ay! Eh, eh! The line of life is long. A

silent childhood; a love-knot hindered; go on, girl—go on, wife and mother; happy life and happy age, but far away—not here—far away; a lucky lot with him you love; to sleep by his side for fifty years and more; to see your children and your grandchildren; to watch the sun rise and set from your door—a happy life, but far away.'

She dropped the girl's hand as quickly as she had seized it, and fell back in her chair mumbling and moaning.

'Gimme brandy, Mrs. L'Estrange—you are a charitable woman—gimme brandy. And port-wine—ah! lemme have some port-wine. Tea? Don't forget the tea. And Jack-in-the-Water drinks awful, he does. Worse than his father; worse than his grandfather—my old man; worse than his great-grandfather — and they all went off at five-and-thirty.'

'I will send you up a basket, Mrs. Medlicott. Come, Phillis, I have to go to the next cottage.'

But Phillis stayed behind a moment.

She touched the old woman on the forehead with her fingers and said softly,

'Tell me, are you happy? Do you suffer?'

'Happy? only the rich are happy. Suffer? of course I suffer. All the pore suffers.'

'Poor thing! May I come and see you and bring you things?'

'O' course you may.'

'And you will tell me about yourself?'

'Child, child!' cried the old woman impatiently. 'Tell you about myself? There, there, you're one of them the Lord loves—wife and mother; happy life and happy death; childer and grandchilder; but far away, far away.'

Mrs. Medlicott gave Phillis her first insight into that life so near and yet so distant from us. She should have been introduced to the ideal cottage, where the stalwart husband supports the smiling wife, and both do honour to the intellectual curate with the long coat and the lofty brow. Where are they—lofty brow of priest and stalwart form of virtuous peasant? Remark that Phillis was a child; the first effect of the years upon a child is to sadden it. Philemon and Baucis in their cot would have rejoiced her; that of old Mrs. Medlicott set her thinking.

And while she drew from memory the old fortune-teller in her cottage, certain words of Abraham Dyson's came back to her:

'Life is a joy to one and a burden to ninety-nine.

Remember in your joy as many as you can of the ninety-nine.

'Learn that you cannot be entirely happy, because of the ninety-nine who are entirely wretched.

'When you reach this knowledge, Phillis, be sure that the Coping-stone is not far off.'

CHAPTER XV.

'Non possidentem multa vocaveris
Recte beatum.'

The manner in which Mr. Cassilis conveyed his advice, or rather instructions, to Gilead Beck inspired the American with a blind confidence. He spoke slowly, firmly, and with deliberation. He spoke as one who knew. Most men speak as those who only half know, like the Frenchman, who said, 'Ce que je sais, je le sais mal; ce que j'ignore, je l'ignore parfaitement.'

Mr. Cassilis weighed each word. While he spoke his eyes sought those of his friend, and looked straight in them, not defiantly, but meditatively. He brought Mr. Beck bills, which he made him accept; and he brought prospectuses, in which the American, finding they were English schemes, invested money at his adviser's suggestion.

'You have now,' said Mr. Cassilis, 'a very large sum invested in different companies; you must consider now how long to hold the shares—when to sell out, in fact.'

'Can't I sell my shares at once, if I please?'

'You certainly can, and so ruin the companies. Consider my undertaking to my friends on the allotment committees.'

'Yes, sir.'

'You forget, Mr. Beck, that you are a wealthy man. We do not manage matters in a hole and corner. The bears have sold on expectation of an allotment. Now as they have not got an allotment, and we have, they must buy. When such men as you buy largely, the effect is to run shares up; when you sell largely, you run them down.'

Mr. Cassilis did not explain that he had himself greatly profited by this tidal influence, and proposed to profit still more.

'Many companies, perfectly sound in principle, may be ruined by a sudden decrease in the price of shares; a panic sets in, and in a few hours the shareholders may lose all. And if you bring this about by selling without concert with the other favoured allottees, you'll be called a black sheep.'

Mr. Beck hesitated. 'It's a hard thing—' he began.

His adviser went on:

'You have thus two things to think of—not to lose your own profit, and not to spread disaster over

a number of other people by the very magnitude of your transactions.'

This was a new light to Gilead.

'Then why sell at all? Why not keep the shares and secure the dividend? It's a hard bank, all this money.'

And this was a new light for the financier.

Hold the shares? When they were, scores of them, at 16 premium? 'You can certainly do that, if you please,' he said slowly. 'That, however, puts you in the simple position of an investor.'

'I thought I was that, Mr. Cassilis.'

'Not at all, Mr. Beck. The wise man distrusts all companies, but puts his hope in a rise or fall. You are not conversant with the way business is done. A company is formed—the A B C let us say. Before any allotment of shares is made, influential brokers, acting in the interest of the promoters, go on to the Stock Exchange and make a market.'

'How is that, sir?'

'They purchase as many shares as they can get. Persons technically called "bears" in London or in New York sell these shares on the chance of an allotment.'

'Well?'

'To their astonishment they don't get any shares allotted. Millions of money in a year are allotted to clerks, Mr. Beck—to anybody, in fact—a market is established, and our shares figure at a pretty premium. Then begins the game of backing and filling—to and fro, backward and forward—and all this time we are gradually unloading the shares on the public, the real holders of everything.'

'I begin to see,' said Mr. Beck slowly.

'By this time you will perceive,' Mr. Cassilis continued, 'the bears are at the mercy of the favoured allottees. You—we—are favoured allottees. Then up go the shares: the public have come in. I recollect an old friend of mine who made a fortune on 'Change—small compared with yours, Mr. Beck, but a great fortune—used to say, talking of shares in his rather homely style, "When they rise, the people buys; when they fa's, they lets 'em goes." Ha, ha! it's so true. I have but a very poor opinion of the Isle of Holyhead Inland Navigation Company; but I thought their shares would go up, and I bought for you. You hold twenty out of fifty thousand. Wait till "the people buys," and then unload cautiously.'

'And leave the rest in the lurch? No, sir, I can't do that.'

'Then, Mr. Beck, I can advise you no more.'

'I hold twenty thousand shares; and if I sell out, that company will bust up.'

'I do not say so much. I say that if you sell out at once you will greatly damage the company. If you sell out gradually you take advantage of the premium, and the company is left exactly where it was before you joined, to stand or fall upon its own merits. But if you sell your shares without concert with our colleagues in these companies you are in, we shall be very properly called black sheep.'

'Then, Mr. Cassilis,' said Gilead, 'in God's name let us have done with companies!'

'Very well; as you please. You have only to give me a power of attorney, and I will dispose of all your shares in the best way possible for your interests. Will you give me that power of attorney?'

'Sir, I am deeply obliged to you for all the trouble you are taking.'

'A power of attorney conveys large powers. It will put into my hands the management of your great revenues. This is not a thing to be done in a moment. Think well, Mr. Beck, before you sign such a document.'

'I have thought, sir,' said Gilead, 'and I will sign it with gratitude.'

'In that case, I will have the document—it is only a printed form—filled up and sent on to you for signature immediately.'

'Thank you, Mr. Cassilis.'

'And as for the shares in the various companies which you have acquired by my advice, I will, if you please, take them all over one with another at the price you gave for them, without considering which have gone up and which down.'

They had all gone up, a fact which Mr. Cassilis might have remembered had he given the thing a moment's thought. The companies on paper were doing extremely well.

'Sir,' said Mr. Beck, starting to his feet, 'you heap coals of fire on my head. When a gentleman like you advises me, I ought to be thankful, and not go worrying around like a hen in a farmyard. The English nation air the only people who can raise a man like you, sir. Honour is your birthright. Duty is your instinct. Truth is your nature. We Americans, sir, come next to you English in that respect. The rest of the world are nowhere.' He was walking backwards and forwards, with his hands in his pockets, while Mr. Cassilis looked at him through his gold eyeglasses as if he was a little amused at the outburst. 'Nowhere, sir. Truth

lives only among us. The French lie to please you. The Germans lie to get something for themselves. The Russians lie because they imitate the French and have caught the bad tricks of the Germans. Sir, no one but an Englishman would have made me the generous offer you have just made, and I respect you for it, Mr. Cassilis, I respect you, sir.'

Gabriel Cassilis looked a little, a very little, confused at all these compliments. Then he held out his hand.

'My dear friend, the respect is mutual,' he said, with a forced smile. 'Do not, however, act always upon your belief in the honesty of Englishmen. It may lead you into mischief.'

'As for the shares,' said Beck, 'they will stay as they are, if you please, or they will be sold, as you will. And no more companies, Mr. Cassilis, for me.'

'You shall have no more,' said his adviser.

In his pocket was a beautiful prospectus, brand new, of a company about to be formed for the purpose of lighting the town of La Concepcion Immaculata on the Amazon River in Brazil with gas. A concession of land had been obtained, engineers had been out to survey the place, and their prospects were most bright.

Now, he felt, that project must be released. He turned the paper in his fingers nervously round and round, and the muscles of his cheek twitched. Then he looked up and smiled, but in a joyless way. Mr. Beck did not smile. He was growing more serious.

'You shall have no more shares,' said the adviser. 'Those that you have already shall be disposed of as soon as possible. Remains the question, What am I to do with the money?

'You have placed yourself,' he went on, 'in my hands by means of that promised power of attorney. I advised, first of all, certain shares my influence enabled me to get allotted to you. You have scruples about selling shares at a profit. Let us respect your scruples, Mr. Beck. Instead of shares, you shall invest your money in Government stocks.'

'That, sir,' said Mr. Beck, 'would meet my wishes.'

'I am glad of it. There are two or three ways of investing money in stocks. The first, your way, is to buy in and take the interest. The next, my way, is to buy in when they are low and sell out when they go up.'

'You may buy in low and sell out lower,' said the astute Beck.

'Not if you can afford to wait. This game, Mr.

Beck, as played by the few who understand it, is one which calls into play all the really valuable qualities of the human intellect.'

Mr. Cassilis rose as he spoke and drew himself up to his full height. Then he began to walk backwards and forwards, turning occasionally to jerk a word straight in the face of his client, who was now leaning against the window with an unlighted cigar between his lips, listening gravely.

'Foolish people think it is a game of gambling. So it is—for them. What is it to us? It is the forecasting of events. It is the pitting of our experience, our sagacity, against what some outsiders call chance and some Providence. We anticipate events; we read the future by the light of the present.'

'Then it isn't true about Malachi,' said Mr. Beck. 'And he wasn't the last prophet.'

Mr. Cassilis went on without regarding this observation:

'There is no game in the world so well worth playing. Politics? You stake your reputation on the breath of the mob. War? You throw away your life at a stockade of savages before you can learn it. Trade? It is the lower branch of the game of speculation. In this game those who have cool heads and iron nerve win. To lose your head

for a moment is to lose the results of a lifetime—unless,' he murmured, as if to himself—'unless you can wait.'

'Well, sir,' said Gilead, 'I am a scholar, and I learn something new every day. Do you wish me to learn this game? It seems to me—'

'You?' Contempt that could not be repressed flashed for a moment across the thin features of the speculator. 'You? No. Perhaps, Mr. Beck, I do not interest you.' He resumed his habitually cold manner, and went on: 'I propose, however, to give you my assistance in investing your money, to such advantage as I can, in English and foreign stocks, including railway companies, but not in the shares of newly-formed trading companies.'

'Sir, this is very kind.'

'You trust me, then, Mr. Beck?'

Again the joyless smile, which gleamed for a moment on his lips and disappeared.

'That is satisfactory to both of us,' he said. 'And I will send up the power of attorney to-day.'

Mr. Cassilis departed. By the morning's work he had acquired absolute control over a quarter of a million of money. Before this he had influence, but he required persuasion for each separate transaction. Now he had this great fortune entirely in his own

control. It was to be the same as his own. And by its means he had the power which every financier wants—that of waiting. He could wait. And Gilead Beck, this man of unparalleled sharpness and unequalled experience, was a Fool. We have been Christians for nearly two thousand years, and yet he who trusts another man is a Fool. It seems odd.

Mr. Cassilis felt young again. He held his head erect as he walked down the steps of the Langham Hotel. He lost his likeness to old Father Time, or at least resembled that potentate in his younger days, when he used to accommodate himself to people, moving slowly for the happy, sometimes sitting down for a few weeks in the case of young lovers, and galloping for the miserable. He strode across the hall with the gait of a Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief, and drove off to the City with the courage of five-and-twenty and the wisdom of sixty.

Before him stretched an endless row of successes, bigger than anything he had ever yet tried. For him the glory of the *coup* and the profit; for Gilead Beck the interest on his money.

In his inner room, after glancing at the pile of letters and telegrams, noting instructions, and reserving a few for private reply, he rang his bell.

The private secretary of Mr. Gabriel Cassilis did

not disdain personally to answer that bell. He was a middle-aged man, with a sleek appearance, and a face which, being fat, shiny, and graced only with a slight fringe of whisker lying well behind, somehow conveyed the impression of a Particular Baptist who was also in the oil-trade. That was not the case, because Mr. Mowll was a member of the Church of England and a sidesman. He lived at Tulse Hill, and was a highly-respectable man. Mr. Cassilis gave him a fair salary, and a small amount—a very small amount—of his confidence. He also, when anything good in a humble way offered, tossed the information to his secretary, who was thus enabled to add materially to his salary.

In the outer world Mr. Mowll was the right-hand man of Gabriel Cassilis, his factotum, and the man, according to some, by whose advice he walked. Gabriel Cassilis walked by no man's advice save his own.

'For you, Mowll,' said his employer briefly 'These I will attend to. Telegraph to—wherever his address is—to the man Wylie—the writing-man'—newspaper people and writers of articles were 'writing-men' to Gabriel Cassilis—'I want him at once.'

Then he absorbed himself again in his papers.

When he was left alone he pulled some printed documents out of a drawer, and compared them with letters which had the New York post-mark upon them. He read carefully, and made notes at various points with a stump of a blue lead-pencil. And he was still engaged on them when, half an hour later, his secretary asked him through a tube whether he would see Mr. Wylie.

Mr. Wylie was an elderly man—a man of sixty—and he was a man on whose face many years of rum-and-water were beginning to tell. He was a man of letters, as he said himself; he had some kind of name, in virtue of certain good things he had written in his early manhood, before the rum-and-water period set in. Now he went up and down, doing odd jobs of literary work, such as are always wanting some one to do them in this great city. He was a kind of literary cab.

'You are free to-day, Mr. Wylie?'

'I am, Mr. Cassilis.'

'Good. Do you remember last year writing a short political pamphlet—I think at my suggestion—on the prospects of Patagonian bond-holders?'

'You gave me all the information, you know.'

'That is, you found the papers in my outer

office, to which all the world has access, and on them you based your opinion.'

'Quite so,' said the pamphleteer. 'I also found five-and-twenty pounds in gold on your secretary's table the day after the pamphlet appeared.'

'Ah! Possibly—perhaps my secretary had private reasons of his own for—'

'Let us talk business, Mr. Cassilis,' said the author a little roughly. 'You want me to do something. What is it?'

'Do you know the affairs of Eldorado?'

'I have heard of Eldorado bonds. Of course, I have no bonds either of Eldorado or any other stock.'

'I have here certain papers—published papers—on the resources of the country,' said Mr. Cassilis. 'I think it might pay a clever man to read them. He would probably arrive at the conclusion that the Republic, with its present income, cannot hope to pay its dividends—'

'Must smash up, in short.'

'Do not interrupt. But, with any assurance of activity and honesty in the application of its borrowed money, there seems, if this paper is correct—it is published in New York—no doubt that the internal resources would be more than sufficient to

carry the State triumphantly through any difficulty.'

'Is it a quick job, or a job that may wait?'

'I dislike calling things jobs, Mr. Wylie. I give you a suggestion which may or may not be useful. If it is useful—it is now half-past twelve o'clock—the pamphlet should be advertised in to-morrow's papers, in the printer's hands by four, and ready on every counter by ten o'clock in the morning. Make your own arrangements with printers, and call on me to-morrow with the pamphlet. On me, mind, not Mr. Mowll.'

'Yes—and—and—'

'And perhaps, if the pamphlet is clever, and expresses a just view of Eldorado and its obligations, there may be double the sum that you once found on my secretary's table.'

Mr. Wylie grasped the papers and retired.

The country of Eldorado is one of the many free, happy, virtuous, and enlightened republics of Central America. It was constituted in the year 1839, after the Confederation broke up. During the thirty years which form its history, it has enjoyed the rule of fifteen Presidents. Don Rufiano Grechyto, its present able administrator, a half-blood Indian by birth, has sat upon the chair of state for nearly a year and

a half, and approaches the period of two years, beyond which no previous President has reigned. He is accordingly ill at ease. Those who survive of his fourteen predecessors await his deposition, and expect him shortly in their own happy circle, where they sit, like Richard II., and talk of royal misfortunes. Eldorado is a richly-endowed country to look at. It has mountains where a few inches of soil separate the feet of the rare wayfarer from rich lodes of silver; forests of mahogany cover its plains; indigo and tobacco flourish in its valleys; everywhere roam cattle waiting to be caught and sent to the London market. Palms and giant tree-ferns rise in its woods; creepers of surpassing beauty hang from tree to tree; in its silent recesses stand, covered with inscriptions which no man can read, the ruins of a perished civilisation. Among these ruins roam the half-savage Indians who form nine-tenths of the population. And in the hot seaboard towns loll and lie the languid whites and half-castes who form the governing class. They never do govern at all; they never improve; they never work; they are a worthless hopeless race; they hoard their energies for the excitement of a pronunciamento; their favourite occupation is a game of monte; they consider thought a wicked waste of energy, save for purposes of cheat-

ing. They ought all, and without exception, to be rubbed out. And it is most unfortunate, in the interests of humanity, that their only strong feeling is an objection to be rubbed out. Otherwise we could plant in Eldorado a colony of Germans; kill the pythons, alligators, jaguars, and other impediments to free civilisation; open up the mines, and make of it a country green with sugar-canes and as sweet as Rimmel's shop by reason of its spicy breezes. There are about five thousand of the dominant class; they possess altogether a revenue of about 60,000*l.* a year, a good deal less than a first-class fortune in England. As every man of the five thousand likes to have his share of the 60,000*l.*, there is not much saved in the year. Consequently when one reads that the Republic of Eldorado owes the people of Great Britain and France, the only two European States which have money to lend, the sum of six millions, one feels sorry for the citizens of Eldorado. It must be a dreadful thing for a high-minded republican to have so little and to owe so much. Fancy a man with 600*l.* a year in debt to the tune of 60,000*l.*

It all grew by degrees. Formerly the Eldoradians owed nothing. In those days champagne was unknown, claret never seen, and the native drink was rum. Nothing can be better for the natives than

their rum, because it kills them quickly, and so rids the earth of a pestilent race. In an evil moment it came into the head of an enterprising Eldoradian President to get up a loan. He asked for a million, which is, of course, a trifle to a nation which has nothing, does nothing, and saves nothing. They got so much of their million as enabled them to raise everybody's salary and the pay of the standing army, also to make the dividend certain for a few years. After this satisfactory transaction somebody boldly ordered the importation of a few cases of brandy. The descent of Avernus is easy and pleasant. Next year they asked for two millions and a half. They got this small trifle conceded to them on advantageous terms—10 per cent, which is nothing to a Republic with 60,000*l.* a year, and the stock at 60. The pay of every official was doubled, the army had new shirts issued, and there were fireworks at San Mercurio, the principal town. They promised to build railways leading from nowhere into continental space, to carry passengers who did not exist, and goods not yet invented. The same innovator who had introduced the brandy now went farther, and sent for claret and champagne. Then they asked for more loans, and went ahead quite like a First-class Power.

When there was no more money to pay the divi-

dends with, and no more loans to be raised, Eldorado busted up.

The gallant officers who commanded the standing army are now shirtless and bootless; the men of the standing army have disappeared; grass grows around the house of the importer of European luxuries; but content has not returned to San Mercurio. The empty bottles remain to remind the populace of lost luxuries; the national taste in drink is hopelessly perverted; San Mercurio is ill at ease; and Don Rufiano Grechyto trembles in his marble palace.

But a year ago the country was not quite played out. There seemed a chance yet to those who had not the materials at hand for a simple sum in Arithmetic.

The next morning saw the appearance of a pamphlet—a short but telling pamphlet of thirty-two pages—called 'Eldorado and her Resources. Addressed to the Holders of Eldorado Stock, by Oliver St. George Wylie.'

The author took a gloomy but not a despairing view. He mentioned that where there was no revenue there could be no dividends. Therefore, he said, it behoved Eldorado stockholders to be sure that something was being done with their money. Then he gave pages of facts and figures which proved

the utter insolvency of the State unless something could be done. And he then proceeded to point out the amazing resources of the country, could only a little energy be introduced into its Council. He drew a lively picture of millions of acres, the finest ground in the world, planted with sugar-canes; forests of mahogany; silver mines worked by contented and laborious Indians; ports crowded with merchant fleets, each returning home with rich argosies; and a luxurious capital of marble made beautiful by countless palaces.

At eleven Mr. Wylie called on Gabriel Cassilis again. He brought with him his pamphlet.

'I have read it already,' said Mr. Cassilis. 'It is on the whole well done, and expresses my own view, in part. But I think you have piled it up too much towards the end.'

'Why did you not give me clearer instructions, then?'

'I daresay it will have a success. Meantime,' said the financier, pushing over a little bag, 'you can count that. There ought to be fifty sovereigns. Good-morning, Mr. Wylie.'

'Good-morning, Mr. Cassilis. I don't know'—he turned the bag of gold over in his hands—'I don't know; thirty years ago I should have looked

with suspicion on such a job as this; thirty years ago—'

'Good-morning, Mr. Wylie.'

'Thirty years ago I should have thought that a man who could afford fifty pounds for a pamphlet—'

'Well?'

'Well—that he had his little game. And I should have left that man to play it by himself. Good-morning again, Mr. Cassilis. You know my address, I believe, in case of any other little job turning up.'

That afternoon Eldorado stock went down. It was lucky for Mr. Gabriel Cassilis, because he wished to buy in—and did—largely.

CHAPTER XVI.

'It is my lady; O, it is my love—
Would that she knew she were!'

'JACK is late,' said Phillis.

She was making the prettiest picture that painter ever drew, standing in the sunlight, with the laburnums and lilacs behind her in their fresh spring glory. Her slender and shapely figure clad in its black riding-habit stood out in relief against the light and shade of the newly-born foliage; she wore one of the pretty hats of last year's fashion, and in her hand she carried the flowers she had just been gathering. Her face was in repose, and in its clear straight lines might have served for a model Diana, chaste and fair. It was habitually rather a grave face; that came of much solitude and long companionship with an old man. And the contrast was all the greater when she lit up with a smile that was like a touch of tender sunshine upon her face and gave the statue a soul. But now she stood waiting, and her eyes were grave.

Agatha L'Estrange watched her from her shady garden-seat. The girl's mind was full of the hidden possibilities of things—for herself: the elder lady—to whom life had given, as she thought, all it had to give—was thinking of these possibilities too—for her charge. Only they approached the subject from different points of view. To the girl, an eager looking forward to new joys which were yet not the ordinary joys of London maidenhood. Each successive day was to reveal to her more secrets of life; she was born for happiness and sunshine; the future was brighter in some dim and misty fashion, far brighter than the present; it was like a picture by Claude, where the untrained eye sees nothing but mist and vapour, rich with gorgeous colour, blurring the outlines which lie behind. But the elder lady saw the present and feared the future. Every man thinks he will succeed till he finds out his own weakness; every woman thinks she is born for the best of this world's gifts—to happiness, to be lapped in warmth and comfort, to be clothed with the love of husband and children as with a garment. Some women get it. Agatha had not received this great happiness. A short two years of colourless wedded life with a man old enough to be her father, and twenty years of widowhood. It was not the lot she might have

chosen; not the lot she wished for Phillis. And then she thought of Jack Dunquerque. Oddly enough, the future, in whatever shape it was present to the brain of Phillis, was never without the figure of Jack Dunquerque.

'Jack is late,' said Phillis.

'Come here, dear, out of the sun; we must take a little care of our complexion. Sit down, and let us talk.'

Agatha took Phillis's hand in hers, as the girl sat upon the grass at her feet.

'Let us talk. Tell me, dear Phillis, don't you think a little too much about Mr. Dunquerque?'

'About Jack? How can I, Agatha? Is he not my first friend?'

She did not blush; she did not hesitate; she looked frankly in Agatha's face. The light of love which the elder lady expected was not there yet.

'Changed as you are, my dear, in some things you are only a child still,' said Agatha.

'Am I only a child?' asked Phillis. 'Tell me why you say so now, dear Agatha. Is it because I am fond of Jack?'

'No, dear,' Mrs. L'Estrange laughed. What was to be said to this *jeune ingénue*? 'Not quite that.'

'I have learned a great deal—O, a great deal—since I came here. How ignorant I was! How foolish!'

'What have you learned, Phillis?'

'Well, about people. They are not all so interesting as they seemed at first. Agatha, it seems like a loss not to think so much of people as I did. Some are foolish, like the poor curate—are all curates foolish, I wonder?—some seem to say one thing and mean another, like Mr. Cassilis; some do not seem to care for anything in the world except dancing; some talk as if china was the only thing worth living for; but some are altogether lovely and charming, like yourself, my dear.'

'Go on, Phillis, and tell me more.'

'Shall I? I am foolish perhaps, but most of our visitors have disappointed me. How *can* people talk about china as if the thing could be *felt*, like a picture? What is it they like so much in dancing and skating-rinks, that they prefer them to music and painting, and—and—the beautiful river?'

'Wait till you come out, dear Phillis,' said Agatha.

For all the things in which young ladies do most delight were to her a vanity and foolishness. She heard them talk and she could not understand. She

was to wait till she came out. And was her coming out to be the putting on of the Coping-stone?

'Jack is late,' said Phillis.

It was a little expedition. Mrs. L'Estrange and Gilead Beck were to drive to Hampton Court, while Jack and Phillis rode. It was not the first of such expeditions. In late May and early June the Greater London, as the Registrar calls it, is a marvel and a miracle of loveliness; in all the world there are no such meadows of buttercups, with fragrant hedges of thorn; there are no such generous and luxuriant growths of westeria, with purple clusters; there are no such woods of horse-chestnuts, with massive pyramids of white blossom; there are no such apple-orchards and snow-clad forests of white-blossomed plum-trees as are to be seen around this great city of ours. Colonials returned from exile shed tears when they see them, and think of arid Aden and thirsty Indian plains; the American owns that though Lake George with its hundred islets is lovely, and the Hudson River a thing to dream of, there is nothing in the States to place beside the incomparable result of wealth and loving care which the outlying suburbs of south and western London show.

If it was new to Phillis; if every new journey

made her pulses bound, and every new place seen was another revelation—it was also new to the American, who looked so grave and smiled so kindly, and sometimes made such funny observations.

Gilead Beck was more silent with the ladies than with Jack, which was natural, because his only experience of the sex was that uncomfortable episode in his life when he taught school and fought poor Pete Conkling. And to this adventurer, this man who had been of all trades—who had roamed about the world for thirty years; who had habitually consorted with miners and adventurers, whom the comic American books have taught us to regard as a compound of drunkard, gambler, buccaneer, blasphemer, and weeping sentimentalist—his manner of life had not been able to destroy the chivalrous respect for women with which an American begins life. Only he had never known a lady at all until now: never any lady in America.

In spite of his life, this man was neither coarse nor vulgar. He was modest, knowing his defects, and he was humble. Nevertheless he had the self-respect which none of his countrymen are without. He was an undeniable 'ranker,' a fact of which he was proud, because, if he had a weakness, it was to regard himself as another Cromwell, singled out and

chosen. He had two languages, one of which he made sparing use, save when he narrated his American experiences. This, as we have seen, was a highly ornamented tongue, a gallery of imagery, a painted chamber of decorative metaphor—the language of wild California, an *argot* which, on occasions, he handled with astounding vigour. The other was the tongue of the cultivated American. In England we bark: in the States they speak. We fling out our conversation in jerks; the man of the States shapes his carefully in his brain before he speaks. Gilead Beck spoke like a gentleman of Boston, save that his defective education did not allow him to speak so well.

His great terror was the word Shoddy. He looked at Shoddy full in the face; he made up his mind what Shoddy was—the thing which pretends to be what it is not, a branch of the great family which has the Prig at one end and the Snob at the other—and he was resolute in avoiding the slightest suspicion of Shoddy.

If he was of obscure birth, with antecedents which left him nothing to boast of but honesty, he was also soft-hearted as a girl, quick in sympathy, which Adam Smith teaches us is the groundwork of all morals, and refined in thought. After many

years, a man's habitual thoughts are stamped upon his face. The face of Gilead Beck was a record of purity and integrity. Such a man in England would, by the power of circumstances, have been forced into taprooms, and slowly dragged downwards into that beery morass in which, as in another Malebolge, the British workman lies stupefied and helpless. Some wicked cynic—was it Thackeray?—said that below a certain class no English woman knows the meaning of virtue. He might have said, with greater truth, that below a certain class no Englishman knows the meaning of self-respect.

To go into that orderly house at Twickenham, where the higher uses of wealth were practically illustrated by a refinement new to the good ex-miner, was to this American in itself an education, and none the less useful because it came late in life. To be with the ladies, to see the tender graces of the elder and the sweetness of the younger, filled his heart with emotion.

'The Luck of the Golden Butterfly, Mrs. L'Estrange,' he said, 'is more than what the old squaw thought. It began with dollars, but it has brought me—this.'

They were sitting in the garden, Agatha and Gilead Beck, while Jack Dunquerque and Phillis

were watering flowers, or gathering them, or always doing something which would keep Jack close to the girl.

'If by this you mean friendship, Mr. Beck,' said Agatha, 'I am very glad of it. Dollars, as you call money, may take to themselves wings and fly away, but friends do not.'

It will be observed that Agatha L'Estrange had never seen reason to abandon the old-fashioned rules invented by those philosophers who lived before Rochefoucauld.

'I sometimes think I should like to try,' said Gilead Beck. 'Poor men have no friends; they have mates on our side the water, and pals on yours.'

'Mates and pals?' cried Phillis, laughing. 'Jack, do you know mates and pals?'

'I ought to,' said Jack, 'because I'm poor enough.'

'Friends come to rich folk naturally, like the fruit to the tree, or—or—the flower to the rose,' Gilead added poetically.

'Or the mud to the wheel,' said Jack.

'Suppose all my dollars were suddenly to vamose —I mean, to vanish away,' Gilead Beck went on solemnly—'would the friends vanish away too?'

'Jack would not,' said Phillis promptly, 'and Agatha would not. Nor should I.'

She held out her hand in the free frank manner which was her greatest charm. Gilead Beck took the little fingers in his big rough hand, the bones of which seemed to stick out all over it, so rugged and hard it was, and looked in her face with the solemn smile which made Phillis trust in him, and raised her fingers to his lips.

Then she blushed with a pretty confusion, which drove poor Jack to the verge of madness. Indeed, the ardour of his passion and the necessity for keeping silence were together making the young man thin and pale.

They were gradually exploring, this party of four, the outside gardens, parks, castles, and views of London. Of course they were as new to Jack and Mrs. L'Estrange as they were to Phillis and the American. Jack knew Greenwich, where he had dined; and Richmond, where he had dined; and the Crystal Palace, where he had also dined, revealed to him one summer evening an unknown stretch of fair country: more than that he knew not.

Perhaps more exciting pleasures might have been found, but this simple party found their own un-

sophisticated delight in driving and riding through green lanes.

'Phillis will have to come out next year,' said Agatha, half apologising to herself for enjoying such things. 'We must amuse her while we can.'

They went to Virginia Water, where Mr. Beck made some excellent observations on the ruins and on the flight of time, insomuch that it was really sad to discover that they were only, so to speak, new ruins.

They went to Hampton Court, where they strolled through the picture-galleries and looked at the Lely beauties; walked up the long avenues, and saw that quaint old mediæval garden which lies hidden away at the side of the Palace, marked by few. Gilead Beck said that if he was the Queen and had such a place he should sometimes live in it, if only for the sake of giving a dinner in the great Hall. But Phillis liked best the gardens, with their old-fashioned flowers, and the peace which reigns perpetually in the quaint old courts. And Gilead Beck asked Jack privately if he thought the Palace might be bought, and if so, for how much.

They visited Windsor. Mr. Beck said that if he had such a location he should always live there; he speculated on the probable cost of erecting such a

fortress on the banks of the Hudson River; and then he cast his imagination backwards up the stream of time and plunged into history.

Phillis allowed him to go on, while he jumbled kings, mixed up cardinals, and tried, by the recovery of old associations, to connect the venerable pile with the past.

'From one of those windows, I guess,' he said, pointing his long arm vaguely round the narrow lattices, 'Charles came out to be beheaded, while Oliver Cromwell spurted ink in his face. It was rough on the poor king. Seems to me, kings very often do have a rough time. And perhaps too that Cardinal Thomas à Beckett, when he told Henry IV. that he wished he'd served his country as well as he'd loved his God, it was on this very terrace. Perhaps—'

'O Mr. Beck, when *did* you learn English history?' cried Phillis.

Then, like a little pedant as she was, she began to unfold all that she knew about the old fortress and its history. Its history is not so grim as that of the Tower of London, which she had once narrated to Jack Dunquerque; but it has a picturesque story of its own, which the girl somehow made out from the bare facts of English history—all she knew.

But these her imagination converted into living and indisputable truths, pictures whose only fault was that the lights were too bright and the shadows too intense.

Alas, this is the way with posterity! The dead are to be judged as they seem from such acts as have remained on record. The force of circumstances, the mixture of motives, the general muddle of good and bad together, are lost in the summing-up; and history, which after all only does what Phillis did, but takes longer to do it, paints Nero black and Titus white, with the clear and hard outline of an etching.

Gilead Beck, after the lecture, looked round the place with renewed interest.

'I am more ignorant than I thought,' he said humbly. 'But I am trying to read, Miss Fleming.'

'Are you!' she cried, with a real delight in finding, as she thought, one other person in the world as ignorant of that art as herself. 'And how far have you got?'

'I've got so far,' he said, 'that I've lost my way, and shall have to go back again. It was all through Robert Browning. My dear young lady,' he said this in his most impressive tones, 'if you should chance upon one of his books with a pretty title, such as *Red Cotton Nightcap Country* or *Fifine at the Fair*,

don't read it, don't try it. It isn't a fairy story, nor a love story. It's a story without an end, it's a story told upsy-down ; it's like wandering in a forest without a path. It gets into your brain and makes it go round; it gets into your eyes and makes you see ghosts. Don't you look at that book.

'Reading in a general way, and if you don't take too much of it, is a fine thing,' he continued. 'The difficulty is to keep the volumes separate in your head. Anybody can write a book. I've written columns enough in the *Clearville Roarer* for a dozen books; but it takes a man to read one.'

'Ah, but it is different with you,' said Phillis. 'I am only in words of two syllables. I've just got through the first reading-book. "The cat has drunk up all the milk." I suppose I must go on with it, but I think it is better to have some one to read for you. I am sure Jack would read for me whenever I asked him.'

'I never thought of that,' said Gilead Beck. 'Why not keep a clerk to read for you, and pay out the information in small chunks? I should like to tackle Mr. Carlyle that way.'

'Agatha is reading a novel to me now,' Phillis went on. 'There is a girl in it; but somehow I think my own life is more interesting than hers.

She belongs to a part of the country where the common people say clever things—O, very clever things!—and she herself says all sorts of clever things.'

'Mr. Dunquerque,' interrupted Gilead Beck, who was not listening, 'would read to you all the days of his life, I think, if you would let him.'

Phillis made no reply. As she neither blushed, nor smiled, nor gave any of the ordinary signs of apprehension with which most young ladies would have received this speech, it is to be presumed that she did not take in the full meaning of it.

'There is one thing about Mr. Dunquerque,' Gilead Beck went on, 'that belongs, I reckon, to you English people only. He is not a young man—'

'Jack not a young man? Why, Mr. Beck—'

'Not what we call a young man. Our young men are sixteen and seventeen. Mr. Dunquerque is five-and-twenty. Our men of five-and-twenty are grave and full of care. Mr. Dunquerque is light-hearted and laughs. That is what I like him for.'

'Yes; Jack laughs. I should not like to see Jack grave.'

She spoke of him as if he were her own property. To be sure, he was her first and principal friend. She could talk to him as she could talk to no one

else. And she loved him with the deep and passionless love, as yet, of a sister.

'Yes,' said Gilead Beck, looking round him, 'England is a great country. Its young men are not all mad for dollars; they can laugh and be happy; and the land is one great garden. Miss Fleming, that is the happiest country, I guess, whose people the longest keep their youth.'

She only half understood him, but she looked in his face with her sweet smile.

'It is like a dream. That I should be walking here with you, such as you, in this grand place—I, Gilead P. Beck. To be with you and Mr. Dunquerque is like getting back the youth I never had: youth that isn't always thinkin' about the next day; youth that isn't always plannin' for the future; youth that has time to enjoy the sunshine, to look into a sweet gell's eyes and fall in love—like you, my pretty, and Mr. Dunquerque—who saved my life.'

He added these last words as an after-thought, and as if he was reminded of some duty forgotten.

Phillis was silent, because his words fell upon her heart and made her think. It was not her youth that was prolonged; it was her childhood. And that was dropping from her now like the shell of the chrysalis. She thought how, somewhere in the

world, there were people born to be unhappy, and she felt humiliated when she was selfishly enjoying what they could not. Somewhere in the world—and where? Close to her, in the cottages where Mrs. L'Estrange had taken her.

For until then the poor, who are always with us, were not unhappy, to Phillis, nor hungry, nor deserving of pity and sympathy; they were only picturesque.

They went to St. George's Chapel, after overruling Gilead Beck's objections to attending divine service—for he said that he hadn't been to meetin' for more than thirty years; also, that he had not yet 'got religion'—and when he stood in the stall under the banner of its rightful owner he looked on from an outsider's point of view.

The ceremonial of the ancient Church of England was to him a pageant and a scenic display. The picture, however, was very fine: the grand chapel with its splendour of ornamentation; the banners and heraldry; the surpliced sweet-voiced boys; the dignified white-robed clergymen; the roll of the organ; the sunlight through the painted glass; even the young subaltern who came clanking into the chapel as the service began,—there was nothing, he said, in America which could be reckoned a patch

upon it. Church in Avenue 39, New York, was painted and gilded in imitation of the Alhambra; that was considered fine, but could not be compared with St. George's, Windsor. And the performance of the service, he said, was so good as to have merited a larger audience.

Jack Dunquerque, I grieve to say, did not attend to the service. He was standing beside Phillis, and he watched her with hungry eyes. For she was looking before her in a sort of trance. The beauty of the place intoxicated her. She listened with soft eyes and parted lips. All was artistic and beautiful. The chapel was peopled again with mailed knights; the voices in the anthem sang the greatness and the glory of England; the sunshine through the painted glass gave colour to the picture in her brain; and when the service was over she came out with dazed look, as one who is snatched too suddenly from a dream of heaven.

This too, like everything else, was part of her education. She had to learn the beauty of the world and its splendours. She was to see the things she had only dreamed of, but by dreaming had wrapped in a cloud of coloured mist.

When was it to be completed, her education? Phillis waited for that Coping-stone for which Joseph

Jagenal was vainly searching. She laughed when she thought of it, the mysterious completion of Abraham Dyson's great fabric. What was it?

She had not long to wait.

'I love her, Mrs. L'Estrange,' said Jack Dunquerque passionately on the evening of the last of their expeditions; 'I love her.'

'I have seen it for some time,' Agatha replied. 'And I wanted to speak to you before, but I did not like to. I am afraid I have been very wrong in encouraging you to come here so often.'

'Who could help loving her?' he cried. 'Tell me, Mrs. L'Estrange, you who have known so many, was there ever a girl like Phillis—so sweet, so fresh, so pretty, and so good?'

'Indeed, she is all that you say,' Agatha acknowledged.

'And will you be my friend with Colquhoun? I am going to see him to-morrow about it, because I cannot stand it any longer.'

'He knows that you visit me; he will be prepared in a way. And—O Mr. Dunquerque, why are you in such a hurry? Phillis is so young and you are so young.'

'I am five-and-twenty, and Phillis is nineteen.'

'Then Phillis is so inexperienced.'

'Yes; she is inexperienced,' Jack repeated. 'And if experience comes, she may learn to love another man.'

'That is what all the men say. Why, you silly boy, if Phillis were to love you first, do you think a thousand men could make her give you up?'

'You are right: but she does not love me; she only likes me; she does not know what love means. That is bad enough to think of. But even that isn't the worst.'

'What more is there?'

'I am so horribly, so abominably poor. My brother Isleworth is the poorest peer in the kingdom, and I am about the poorest younger son. And Colquhoun will think I am coming after Phillis's money.'

'As you are poor, it will be a great comfort for everybody concerned,' said Agatha, with good sense, 'to think that, should you marry Phillis, she has some money to help you with. Go and see Lawrence Colquhoun, Mr. Dunquerque, and—and if I can help your cause, I will. There! Now let us have no more.'

'They will make a pretty pair,' said Mr. Gilead Beck presently to Mrs. L'Estrange.

'O Mr. Beck, you are all in a plot! And

perhaps after all — and Mr. Dunquerque is so poor.'

'Is that so?' Mr. Beck asked eagerly. 'Will the young lady's guardian refuse the best man in all the world because he is poor? Now, Mrs. L'Estrange, there's only one way out of this muss, and perhaps you will take that way for me.'

'What is it, Mr. Beck?'

'I can't say myself to Mr. Dunquerque, "What is mine is yours." And I can't say to Mr. Colquhoun —not with the delicacy that you would put into it— that Mr. Dunquerque shall have all I've got to make him happy. I want you to say that for me. Tell him there is no two ways about it—that Mr. Dunquerque *must* marry Miss Fleming. Lord, Lord! why, they are made for each other! Look at him now, Mrs. L'Estrange, leanin' towards her, with a look half respectful and half hungry. And look at her, with her sweet innocent eyes; she doesn't understand it, she doesn't know what he's beatin' down with all his might, the strong honest love of a man —the best thing he's got to give. Wait till you give the word, and she feels his arms about her waist, and his lips close to hers. It's a beautiful thing, love. I've never been in love myself, but I've watched those that were; and I venture to tell you, Mrs.

L'Estrange, that from the Queen down to the kitchen-maid, there isn't a woman among them all that isn't the better for being loved. And they know it too, all of them, except that pretty creature.'

CHAPTER XVII.

'Pictoribus atque Poetis
Quidlibet audendi semper fuit æqua potestas.'

'WITH commissions'—Cornelius Jagenal spoke as if Gilead Beck was a man of multitude, signifying many, and as if one commission was a thousand—'with commissions pouring in as they should, brother Humphrey—'

'And the great Epic, the masterpiece of the century, about to be published in the Grand Style, brother Cornelius, the only style which is worthy of its merits—'

'Something definite should be attempted, Humphrey—'

'You mean, brother—'

'I mean, Humphrey—'

'With regard to—'

'With regard to Phillis Fleming.'

They looked at each other meaningly and firmly. The little table was between them; it was past twelve o'clock; already two or three soda-water bottles were

lying on it empty; and the world looked rosy to the poetic pair.

Humphrey was the first to speak after the young lady's name was mentioned. He removed the pipe from his mouth, threw back his head, stroked his long brown beard, and addressed the ceiling.

'She is,' he said, 'she is indeed a charming girl. Her outlines finely but firmly drawn; her colouring delicate, but strongly accentuated; the grouping to which she lends herself always differentiated artistically; her single attitudes designed naturally and with freedom; her flesh-tints remarkably pure and sweet; her draperies falling in artistic folds; her atmosphere softened as by the perfumed mists of morning; her hair tied in the simple knot which is the admiration and despair of many painters;—you agree with my rendering, brother Cornelius'—he turned his reflective gaze from the ceiling, and fixed his lustrous eyes, perhaps with the least little look of triumph, upon his brother—'my rendering of this incomparable Work?'

He spoke of the young lady as if she were a picture. This was because, immediately after receiving his commission, he bethought him of reading a little modern criticism, and so bought the *Academy* for a few weeks. In that clear bubbling fount of

modern English undefiled the Art criticisms are done with such entire freedom from cant and affectation that they are a pleasure to read; and from its pages every Prig is so jealously kept out, that the paper is as widely circulated and as popular as *Punch;* thus Humphrey Jagenal acquired a new jargon of Art criticism, which he developed and made his own.

Cornelius had been profiting by the same delightful and genial enemy to Mutual Admiration Societies. He was a little taken aback for a moment by the eloquence and fidelity of his brother's word-picture, but stimulated to rivalry. He made answer, gazing into the black and hollow depths of the empty fireplace, and speaking slowly, as if he enjoyed his words too much to let them slip out too fast:

'She is all that you say, Humphrey. From your standpoint nothing could be better. I judge her, however, from my own platform. I look on her as one of Nature's sweetest poems; such a poem as defies the highest effort of the greatest creative genius; where the cadenced lines are sunlit, and as they ripple on make music in your soul. You are rapt with their beauty; you are saddened with the unapproachable magic of their charm; you feel the deepest emotions of the heart awakened and beating in responsive harmony. And when, after long and

patient watching, the Searcher after the Truth of Beauty feels each verse sink deeper and deeper within him, till it becomes a part of his own nature, there arises before him, clad in mystic and transparent Coan robe, the spirit of subtle wisdom, long lying perdu in those magic utterances. She is a lyric; she is a sonnet; she is an epigram—'

'At least,' interrupted Humphrey unkindly, cutting short his brother's freest flow, 'at least she doesn't carry a sting.'

'Then let us say an Idyl—'

'Cornelius, make an Idyl yourself for her,' Humphrey interrupted again, because really his brother was taking an unfair advantage of a paltry verbal superiority. 'Now that we have both described her—and I am sure, brother,' he added, out of the kindness of his heart, 'no description could be more poetically true than your own—it would make even a stranger see Phillis standing in a vision before his eyes. But let us see what had better be done.'

'We must act at once, Humphrey. We must call upon her at her guardian's, Mrs. L'Estrange, at Twickenham. Perhaps that lady does not know so many men of genius as to render the accession of two more to her circle anything but a pleasure and an honour. And as for our next steps, they

must be guided by our finesse, of our knowledge of the world, our insight into a woman's heart, our—shall I say our power of intrigue, Humphrey?'

Then the Artist positively winked. It is not a gesture to be commended from an artistic point of view, but he did it. Then he chuckled and wagged his head.

Then the Poet in his turn also winked, chuckled, and wagged his head too.

'We understand each other, Humphrey. We always do.'

'We must make our own opportunity,' said the Artist thoughtfully. 'Not together, but separately.'

'Surely separately. Together would never do.'

'We will go to bed early to-night, in order to be fresh to-morrow. Have you—did you—can you give me any of your own experiences in this way, Cornelius?'

The Poet shook his head.

'I may have been wooed,' he said. 'Men of genius are always run after. But as I am a bachelor, you see it is clear that I never proposed.'

Humphrey had much the same idea in his own mind, and felt as if the wind was a little taken out of his sails. This often happens when two sister craft cruise so very close alongside of each other.

'Do not let us be nervous, Humphrey,' the elder brother went on kindly. 'It is the simplest thing in the world, I daresay, when you come to do it. Love finds out a way.'

'When I was in Rome—' Humphrey said, casting his thoughts backwards thirty years.

'When I was in Heidelberg—' said Cornelius, in the same mood of retrospective meditation.

'There was a model—a young artist's model—'

'There was a little country girl—'

'With the darkest eyes, and hair of a deep blue-black, the kind of colour one seems only to read of or to see in a picture.'

'With blue eyes as limpid as the waters of the Neckar, and light-brown hair which caught the sunshine in a way that one seldom seems to see, but which we poets sometimes sing of.'

Then they both started and looked at each other guiltily.

'Cornelius,' said Humphrey, 'I think that Phillis would not like these reminiscences. We must offer virgin hearts.'

'True, brother,' said Cornelius, with a sigh, 'we must. Yet the recollection is not unpleasant.'

They went to bed early, only concentrating into

two hours the brandy-and-soda of four. It was a wonderful thing that neither gave the other the least hint of a separate and individual preference for Phillis. They were running together, as usual, in double harness, and so far as might be gathered from their conversation they were proposing to themselves that both should marry Phillis.

They dressed with more than usual care in the morning, and, without taking their customary walk, sat each in his own room till two o'clock, when Humphrey sought Cornelius in the Workshop.

They surveyed each other with admiration. They were certainly a remarkable pair, and, save for that little redness of the nose already alluded to, they were more youthful than one would conceive possible at the age of fifty. Their step was elastic; their eyes were bright: Humphrey's beard was as brown and silky, Cornelius's cheek as smooth as twenty years before. This it is to lead a life unclouded and devoted to contemplation of Art. This it is to have a younger brother, successful, and never tired of working for his seniors.

'We are not nervous, brother?' asked Cornelius, with a little hesitation.

'Not at all,' said Humphrey sturdily, 'not at all. Still, to steady the system, perhaps—'

'Yes,' said Cornelius; 'you are quite right, brother. We will.'

There was no need of words. The reader knows already what was implied.

Humphrey led the way to the dining-room, where he speedily found a pint of champagne. With this modest pick-me-up, which no one surely will grudge the brethren, they started on their way.

'What we need, Cornelius,' said Humphrey, putting himself outside the last drop,—'what we need. Not what we wish for.'

Then he straightened his back, smote his chest, stamped lustily with his right foot, and looked like a war-horse before the battle.

Unconscious of the approaching attack of these two conquering heroes, Phillis and Agatha L'Estrange were sitting in the shade and on the grass: the elder lady with some work, the younger doing nothing. It was a special characteristic with her that she could sit for hours doing nothing. So the modern Arabs, the gipsies, niggerdom in general, and all that large section of humanity which has never learned to read and write, are contented to fold their hands, lie down, and think away the golden hours. What they think about, these untutored tribes, the Lord

only knows. Whether by degrees, and as they grow old, some faint intelligence of the divine order sinks into their souls, or whether they become slowly enwrapped in the beauty of the world, or whether their thoughts, always turned in the bacon-and-cabbage direction, are wholly gross and earthly, I cannot tell. Phillis's thoughts were still as the thoughts of a child, but as those of a child passing into womanhood: partly selfish, inasmuch as she consciously placed her own individuality, as every child does, in the centre of the universe, and made the sun, the moon, the planets, and all the minor stars revolve around her; partly unselfish, because they hovered about the forms of the two or three people she loved, and took the shape of devising means of pleasing these people; partly artistic, because the beauty of the June afternoon cried aloud for admiration, while the sunshine lay on the lawns and the flower-beds, threw up the light leaves and blossoms of the passion-flower on the house-side, and made darker shadows in the gables, while the glorious river ran swiftly at her feet. The river of which she never tired. Other things lost their novelty, but the river never.

'I wish Jack Dunquerque were here,' she said at last.

'I wish so, too,' said Agatha. 'Why did we not invite him, Phillis?'

Then they were silent again.

'I wish Mr. Beck would call,' remarked Phillis.

'My dear, we do nothing but wish. But here is somebody—two young gentlemen. Who are they, I wonder?'

'O Agatha, they are the Twins!'

Phillis sprang from her seat, and ran to meet them with a most unaffected pleasure.

'This is Mr. Cornelius Jagenal,' she said, introducing them to Agatha. 'The Poet, you know.' And here she laughed, because Agatha did not know, and Cornelius perked up his head, and tried to look unconscious of his fame. 'And this is Mr. Humphrey, the Artist.' And then she laughed again, because Humphrey did exactly the same as Cornelius, only with an air of deprecation, as one who should say, 'Never mind my fame for the present.'

It was embarrassing for Mrs. L'Estrange, because she could not for her life recollect any Poet or Artist named Jagenal. The men and their work were alike unknown to her. And why did Phillis laugh? And what did the pair before her look so solemn about?

They were solemn partly from vanity, which is the cause of most of the grave solemnity we so much admire in the world, and partly because, finding themselves face to face with Phillis, they became suddenly and painfully aware that they had come on a delicate errand. Cornelius looked furtively at Humphrey, and the Artist glanced at the Poet, but neither found any help from his brother. Their courage, as evanescent as that of Mr. Robert Acres, was rapidly oozing out at their boots.

Phillis noted their embarrassment, and tried to put them at their ease. This was difficult; they were so inordinately vain, so self-conscious, so unused to anything beyond their daily experience, that they were as awkward as a pair of fantoccini. People who live alone get into the habit of thinking and talking about themselves; the Twins were literally unable to think or speak on any other subject.

Phillis, they saw, to begin with, was altered. Somehow she looked older. Certainly more formidable. And it was awkward to feel that she was taking them in a manner under her own protection before a stranger. And why did she laugh? The task which they discussed with such an airy confidence over the brandy-and-soda assumed, in the

presence of the young lady herself, dimensions quite out of proportion to their midnight estimate. All these considerations made them feel and look ill at ease.

Also it was vexatious that neither of the ladies turned the conversation upon the subject nearest to each man's heart—his own Work. On the contrary, Phillis asked after Joseph, and sent him an invitation to come and see her; Mrs. L'Estrange talked timidly about the weather, and tried them on the Opera, on the Academy, and on the last volume of Browning. It was odd in so great an Artist as Humphrey that he had not yet seen the Academy, and in so great a Poet as Cornelius that he had not read any recent poetry. Then they tried to talk about flowers. The two city-bred artists knew a wallflower from a cabbage and a rose from a sprig of asparagus, and that was all.

Phillis would not help either the Twins or Agatha, so that the former grew more helpless every moment. In fact, the girl was staring at them, and wondering to feel how differently she regarded men and manners since that first evening in Carnarvon-square, when they produced champagne in her honour, and drank it all up themselves.

She remembered how she had looked at them

with awe; how, after a day or two, this reverence vanished; how she found them to be mere shallow wind-bags and humbugs, and regarded them with contempt; how she made fun of them with Jack Dunquerque; and how she drew their portraits.

And now—it was a mark of her advanced education—she looked at them with pity. They were so dependent on each other for admiration; they were so childishly vain; they were so full of themselves; and their daily life of sleep, drink, and boastful pretension showed itself to her experienced head as so mean and sordid a thing.

She came to the help of the whole party, and took the Twins for a walk among the flowers, flattering them, asking how Work got on, congratulating them on their good looks, and generally making things comfortable for them.

Presently she found herself on the sloping bank of the river, where she was wont to sit with Jack. Cornelius Jagenal alone was by her side. She looked round, and saw Humphrey standing before Mrs. L'Estrange, and occasionally glancing over his shoulder. And she noticed, then, a curiously nervous motion of her companion's hand; also that his cheek was twitching with some secret emotion. He looked older too, she thought; perhaps that was the bright

sunlight, which brought out the dells and valleys and the crow's-feet round his eyes.

He cleared his voice with an effort, and opened his mouth to speak, but shut it again, silent.

'You were going to say, Mr. Cornelius?'

'Yes. Will you sit down, Miss Fleming?'

'He is going to tell me about the *Upheaving of Ælfred*,' thought Phillis. 'And how does the Workshop get on?' she asked.

'Fairly well,' he replied modestly. 'We publish in the autumn. The work is to be brought out, you will be glad to learn, with all the luxury of the best illustrations, paper, print, and binding that money can procure.'

'So that all you want is the poem itself,' said Phillis, with a mischievous light in her eyes.

'Ye-yes—' he winced a little. 'As you say, the Epic itself alone is wanting, and that advances with mighty strides. My brother Humphrey—a noble creature is Humphrey, Miss Fleming—'

She bowed and smiled.

'Is he still hard at work? Always hard at work?' She laughed as she asked the question.

'His work is crushing him, Miss Fleming—may I call you Phillis?' He spoke very solemnly—'his work is crushing him.'

'Of course you may, Mr. Cornelius. We are quite old friends. But I am sorry to hear that your brother is being crushed.'

'Yesterday, Phillis—I feel to you already like a brother,' pursued the Poet—'yesterday I discovered the secret of Humphrey's life. May I tell it you?'

'If you please.' She began to be a little bored. Also she noticed that Agatha wore a look of mute suffering, as if the Artist was getting altogether too much for her. 'If you please; but be quick, because I think Mrs. L'Estrange wants me.'

'I will tell you the secret in a few words. My brother Humphrey adores you with all the simplicity and strength of a noble artistic nature.'

'Does he? You mean he likes me very much. How good he is! I am very glad to hear it, Mr. Cornelius, though why it need be a secret I do not know.'

'Then my poor brother—he is all loyalty, and brings you a virgin heart'—O Cornelius! and the model with the blue-black hair!—'an unsullied name, and the bright prospects of requited genius—my brother may hope?'

Phillis did not understand one word.

'Certainly,' she said; 'I am sure I should like to see him hoping.'

'I will tell him, sister Phillis,' said Cornelius, nodding with a sunny smile. 'You have made two men happy, and one at least grateful.'

His mission was accomplished, his task done. It will hardly be believed that this treacherous bard, growing more and more nervous as he reflected on the uncertainty of the wedded life, actually came to a sudden resolution to plead his brother's cause. Humphrey was the younger. Let him bear off the winsome bride.

'It will be a change in our lives,' he said. 'You will allow me to have my share in his happiness.'

Phillis made no reply. Decidedly the Poet was gone distraught with over-much reading and thought.

Cornelius, smiling, crowing, and laughing, almost like a child, pressed her hand and left her, stepping with a youthful elasticity across the lawn. Humphrey, sitting beside Mrs. L'Estrange, was bewildering that good lady with a dissertation on colour *à propos* of a flower which he held in his hand. Agatha could not understand this strange pair, who looked so youthful until you came to see them closely, and then they seemed to be of any age you pleased to name. Nor could she understand their talk, which was pedantic, affected, and continually

involved the theory that the speaker was, next to his brother, the greatest of living men.

If it was awkward and stupid sitting with Humphrey on a bench while he discoursed on Colour, it was still more awkward when the other one appeared with a countenance wreathed with smiles, and sat on the other side. Nor did there appear any reason why the one with the beard should suddenly break off his oration, turn very red in the face, get up, and walk slowly across the lawn to take his brother's place. But that is what he did, and Cornelius took up the running.

Humphrey sat down beside Phillis without speaking. She noticed in him the same characteristics of nervousness as in his brother. Twice he attempted to speak, and twice his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth.

'He is going to tell me that Cornelius adores me,' she thought.

It was instinct. That was exactly what Humphrey—the treacherous Humphrey—had determined on doing. Matrimony, contemplated at close quarters and in the presence of the enemy, so to speak, lost all its charms. Humphrey thought of the pleasant life in Carnarvon-square, and determined, at the very last moment, that if either of them was to marry it

should not be himself. Cornelius was the elder. Let him be married first.

'You are peaceful and happy here, Miss Fleming —may I call you Phillis?'

'Certainly, Mr. Humphrey. We are old friends, you know. And I am very happy here.'

'I am glad'—he sighed heavily—'I am very glad indeed to hear that.'

'Are you not happy, Mr. Humphrey? Why do you look so gloomy? And how is the Great Picture getting on?'

'The "Birth of the Renaissance" is advancing rapidly—rapidly,' he said. 'It is already bought by a rich and generous patron. It will occupy a canvas fourteen feet long by six high.'

'If you have got the canvas, and the frame, and the purchaser, all you want now is the Picture.'

'True, as you say, the Picture. It is all that I want. And that is striding—literally striding. *I* am happy, dear Miss Fleming, dear Phillis, since I may call you by your pretty Christian name. It is of my brother that I think. It is on his account that I feel unhappy.'

'What is the matter with him?'

She tried very hard not to laugh, but would not

trust herself to look in his face. So that he thought she was modestly guessing his secret.

'He is a great, a noble fellow. His life is made up of sacrifices and devoted to hard work. No one works so conscientiously as Cornelius. Now, at length, the prospect opens up, and he will take immediately his true position among English poets.'

'Indeed, I am glad of it.'

'Thank you. Yet he is not happy. There is a secret sorrow in his life.'

'O, dear!' Phillis cried impatiently, 'do let me know it, and at once. Was there ever such a pair of devoted brothers?'

Humphrey was disconcerted for the moment, but went on again:

'A secret which no one has guessed but myself.'

'I know what it is.' She laughed and clapped her hands.

'Has he told you, Phillis? The secret of his life is that my brother Cornelius is attached to you with all the devotion of his grand poetic soul.'

'Why, that was what I thought you were going to say!'

'You knew it?' Humphrey was as solemn as an eight-day clock, while Phillis's eyes danced with mirth. 'And you feel the response of a passionate

nature? He shall be your Petrarch. You shall read his very soul. But Cornelius brings you a virgin heart, a virgin heart, Phillis' (O Humphrey! and after what you know about Gretchen!). 'May he hope that—'

'Certainly he may hope, and so may you. And now we have had quite enough of devotion and secrets and great poetic souls. Come, Mr. Humphrey.'

She rose from the grass and looked him in the face, laughing. For a moment the thought crossed the Artist's brain that he had made a mess of it somehow.

'Now,' she said, joining the other two, 'let us have some tea and be real.'

Neither of them understood her desire to be real, and the Twins declined tea. That beverage they considered worthy only of late breakfast, and to be taken as a morning pick-me-up. So they departed, taking leave with a multitudinous smile and many tender hand-pressures. As they left the garden together arm-in-arm they straightened their backs, held up their heads, and stuck out their legs like the Knave of Spades. And they looked so exactly like a pair of triumphant cocks that Phillis almost expected them to crow.

'*Au revoir*,' said Cornelius, taking off his hat, with a whole wreath of smiles, for a final parting at the gate.

'*Sans dire adieu*,' said Humphrey, doing the same, with a light in his eyes which played upon his beard like sunshine.

'Phillis, my dear,' said Agatha, 'they really are the most wonderful pair I ever saw.'

'They *are* so funny,' said Phillis, laughing. 'They sleep all day, and when they wake up they pretend to have been working. And they sit up all night. And, O Agatha, each one came to me just now, and told me he had a secret to impart to me.'

'What was that, my dear?'

'That the other one adored me, and might he hope?'

'But, Phillis, this is beyond a joke. And actually here, before my very eyes!'

'I said they might both hope. Though I don't know what they are to hope. It seems to me that if those two lazy men, who never do anything but pretend to be exhausted with work, were only to hope for anything at all it might wake them up a little. And they each said that the other would bring me a virgin heart, Agatha. What did they mean?'

Agatha laughed.

'Well, my dear, it is a most uncommon thing to find in a man of fifty, and I should say, if it were true, which I don't believe, that it argued extreme insensibility. Such an offering is desirable at five-and-twenty, but very, very rare, my dear, at any age. And at their time of life I should think that it was like an apple in May—kept too long, Phillis, and tasting of the straw. But then you don't understand.'

Phillis thought that a virgin heart might be one of the things to be understood when the Coping-stone was achieved, and asked no more.

At the Richmond railway-station the brothers, who had not spoken a word to each other since leaving the house, turned into the refreshment-room by common consent and without consultation. They had, as usual, a brandy-and-soda, and on taking the glasses in their hands they looked at each other and smiled.

'Cornelius.'

'Humphrey.'

'Shall we'—the Artist dropped his voice, so that the attendant damsel might not hear—'shall we drink the health and happiness of Phillis?'

'We will, Humphrey,' replied the Poet, with enthusiasm.

When they got into the train and found themselves alone in the carriage they dug each other in the ribs once, with great meaning.

'She knows,' said the Poet, with a grin worthy of Mephistopheles, 'that she has found a virgin heart.'

'She does,' said Humphrey. 'O Cornelius, and the little Gretchen and the milkpails? Byronic Rover!'

'Ah, Humphrey, shall I tell her of the contadina, the black-eyed model, and the old wild days in Rome, eh? Don Giovanni!'

Then they both laughed, and then they fell asleep in the carriage, because it was long past their regular hour for the afternoon nap, and slept till the guard took the tickets at Vauxhall.

END OF VOL. II.

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